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# The Child and His Religion

Dawson

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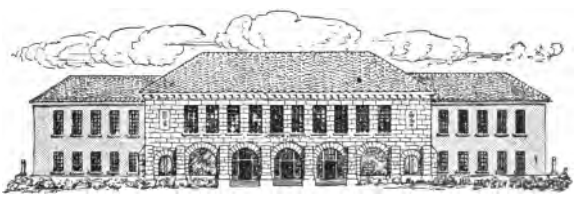

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# The Child and His Religion

# The Child and His Religion

BY

GEORGE E. DAWSON, PH.D.

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TO

MY WIFE AND CHILDREN, WHO, THROUGHOUT THE YEARS, HAVE SUPPLIED MOST OF THE INSPIRATION, AND MUCH OF THE MATERIAL, OF MY THOUGHT, THIS LITTLE VOLUME IS DEDICATED

# PREFACE

The material of this book is largely drawn from magazine articles and addresses already given to the public. Chap. iii, on "Children's Interest in the Bible," is substantially the same as originally published in the *Pedagogical Seminary* for July, 1900, Vol. VII. The other chapters present in modified form the material contained in various articles and addresses. Friends of the writer have expressed the wish that this material might be put in more accessible form, and there has been a certain public demand for the article on "Children's Interest in the Bible." Herein lies the reason for publishing the book.

In bringing this material together for publication in book form, no hope has been cherished of making it a finished product. The book lacks unity, but it is believed that the various chapters discuss topics that have a certain relationship, through the central aim of the writer to bring the so-called natural processes of life and education into harmony with the religious processes. If the book appears somewhat controversial in places, it is a fault of style rather than of spirit. The writer's acquaintance with the unsettled conditions of religious and educational thought of the present is too intimate to allow of his being a dogmatist. The book is given out in the hope that it may help to strengthen the religious and educational views of those who agree with

it, that it may provoke a friendly comparison of judgments from those who do not agree with it, and that it may stimulate all its readers to think out for themselves the problem of religious education.

The writer is grateful for permission, generously given by President G. Stanley Hall, editor of the *Pedagogical Seminary*, to reproduce the article on "Children's Interest in the Bible."

GEORGE E. DAWSON

SPRINGFIELD, MASS.
October 1, 1908

# CONTENTS

## CHAPTER I

PAGE

INTEREST AS A MEASURE OF VALUES . . . . 1

Interest and the educational reformers; Herbart's doctrine of interest; The biological conception of interest; The sequence of interests; Atrophy of interests; Opposition to the doctrine of interest; Study of children's interests in secular education; Interest and religious education.

## CHAPTER II

THE NATURAL RELIGION OF CHILDREN . . . 25

Natural religion and the doctrine of interest in educational history; Science and natural religion; Animism in children; The sense of causality; The instinct of immortality; The faith and good-will of children.

## CHAPTER III

CHILDREN'S INTEREST IN THE BIBLE . . . . 53

The Bible and religious education; Children's choice between the Old and the New Testament; Choice among the books of the Bible; Choice of Bible scenes, stories, and characters; Development of interest in Jesus; Conclusions.

## CHAPTER IV

THE PROBLEM OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION . . . 99

Complexity of the problem; Suggestions from secular education; The aim of religious education; The material of religious education; The method of religious education; Conclusion.

INDEX . . . . . 121

# CHAPTER I

## INTEREST AS A MEASURE OF VALUES

The economy of interest in education has for centuries attracted the attention of educators. Long before it was definitely formulated by Herbart as a pedagogical doctrine, it had a prominent place in the thought both of educational theorists and of practical teachers. In fact, its history is a part of the general movement of educational reform, begun by Rabelais in the sixteenth century, and still working itself out in current civilization. It is in the light of this general movement in educational history that we may best understand the origin and significance of interest as an educational doctrine.

*Interest and the educational reformers.*—The early educational reformers revolted against the dogmatic and artificial education of their time—with its enslavement to books and routine instruction, its stress upon formal discipline, and its repression of children's individuality. Varying from generation to generation, the issues raised by these men have been the centers of controversy down to the present time. Many of them are still unsettled. What is called the "New Education" is still making its demands for more modern branches of study, more practical preparation for life, and a more liberal régime of scholarship and discipline. What is

called the "Old Education" is still contending for the classical languages and mathematics, formal discipline, and academic standards of learning and instruction generally. But throughout these centuries of controversy and change, the motive force of educational reform has not been primarily pedagogical. It has been rather the impulse springing from a changed attitude toward human life. The fundamental characteristic of the first educational reformers was their respect and reverence for the natural, spontaneous tendencies of the soul. They challenged the age-long assumption that human nature was evil in its constitution, and that the beginning and end of education was to destroy the natural qualities, and create, in their stead, a character radically different. They brought to light not merely, or chiefly, a larger understanding of the human soul, but more especially a larger faith in its intrinsic worth. Here is the origin of the view that the natural interests of children are worthy of respect, and that they should be taken into account in all educational programmes. Moreover, it is probably true, in the main, that from Rabelais to the present time men's attitude toward the problem of interest has been primarily determined by what they have thought of human nature. It has been a measure of their faith in the innate goodness and sanity of man's life.

The period of civilization during which the old, formal system of education was established is

identical with what has been called "The Age of Faith." But this faith was narrowly limited in its outlook. It did not include human nature in its survey, nor the objects and forces of the material world. The men who shaped the early systems of Christian education and philosophy had little reverence for what is natural and spontaneous in man's life. They believed that the natural inclinations were wrong, and that they must be changed into harmony with the arbitrary ideals of human life that had become standardized in the theological and philosophical thought of the time. It was therefore not only absurd but dangerous to base the control of life, in any degree, upon natural desires and capacities.

The type of education resulting from such an estimate of human nature is well described in these words of Professor Monroe:

> The old conception of education aimed to remake the nature of the child by forcing upon him the traditional or customary way of thinking, of doing, and even of emotional reaction; to substitute for the instinctive or natural reaction of the child those artificial reactions developed through many generations of religious, intellectual, and social formalism. Human affections were evil, and hence the heart was to be separated from the objects of natural desire. Human senses were untrustworthy, and hence could not be made the basis of knowledge or of instruction. Human inclinations and instincts, springing from a nature depraved in its essence, were toward the evil and were to be eradicated. Natural interests, as expressions of the nature which both education and religion sought to repress and make over, were to be

shunned in all educational processes. To the extent that an activity or task was difficult to perform intellectually and was distasteful emotionally, to this extent it possessed educational value. The first step in the moral education was to "break the will of the child," which in its perverseness but represented the evil of human nature. This was to be followed in his social and moral education by the constant effort to mold the child into the artificial forms of conduct wherein a real and natural motive was hidden in formal behavior satisfactory to the judgment of the adult, even though it might conceal a motive contradictory to the external expression.[1]

This is the type of education satirized by Rabelais in his *Gargantua*, where he makes his bookish hero spend five years and three months in learning his letters so well that he could repeat them in every possible order; thirteen years, six months, and two weeks more in learning to read a variety of Latin authors, as unintelligible as they were uninteresting to him; eighteen years and eleven months in mastering the commentaries of certain learned scholastics so that he could say them over either forward or backward and understand them as well one way as the other; and, finally, sixteen years and two months in learning various formulae for computing the age of the moon and the recurrence of religious festivals. It is against this type of education, too, that Rabelais' larger and more genial faith in human nature protests when he takes Gargantua away from the books and pedantry of scholastic instruction and sends him into the fields to study the creatures and

[1] *Textbook in the History of Education*, p. 566.

forces of nature; into the workshops to learn the structure of wood, stone, and metals, and the process of their manufacture; and out upon the playground to secure vigor of body and mind through free and spontaneous exercise in the open air.

Of the same spirit of protest was Montaigne, another French educational reformer of the sixteenth century. Says this writer:

> The thing a boy should learn is not what the old authors say, but what he himself ought to do when he becomes a man. Wisdom, not knowledge! We may become learned from the learning of others; wise we can never be except by our own wisdom. We are truly learned from knowing the present, not from knowing the past. And yet we toil only to stuff the memory and leave the conscience and the understanding void. Like birds who fly abroad to forage for grain and bring it home in their beak, without tasting it themselves, to feed their young, so our pedants go picking knowledge here and there out of various authors, and hold it at their tongue's end, only to spit it out and distribute it amongst their pupils.[1]

So, too, Comenius, the great Moravian bishop and educator, whose system of instruction was based upon the broadest possible appeal to the natural impulses of the soul. He was the first to see, in a large comprehensive way, that the content and method of education ought to be made significant and attractive to children. He would consider the fundamental desires of the mind, and shape these into an eagerness for learning in every possible way.

[1] *Du pédantisme*, Book J, chap. xxiv.

The parents should praise learning and learned men, show children beautiful books, and treat teachers with respect. The teacher should be kind and fatherly, should distribute praise and reward judiciously, and should always, where possible, keep beautiful and attractive objects before the child. The school buildings should be light, airy, and cheerful, and well furnished with apparatus, as pictures, maps, models, and collections of specimens. The subjects taught should not be too hard for the learner's comprehension, and the more entertaining parts of them should be especially dwelt upon. The method should be natural, and everything that is not essential to the subject or is beyond the pupil should be omitted. The whole philosophy of interest as affecting the spirit and method of education is summed up in these words of Comenius:

Education should be conducted without blows, rigour, or compulsion, as gently and pleasantly as possible, and in the most natural manner (just as a living body increases in size without any straining or forcible extension of the limbs; since if food, care, and exercise are properly supplied, the body grows and becomes strong, gradually, imperceptibly, and of its own accord. In the same way I maintain that nutriment, care, and exercise, prudently supplied to the mind, lead it naturally to wisdom, virtue and piety). The education given should not be false but real, not superficial but thorough; that is to say, the rational animal, man, should be guided not by the intellects of other men, but by his own; should not merely read the opinions of others and grasp their meaning or commit them to memory and repeat them, but should himself pene-

trate to the root of things and acquire the habit of genuinely understanding and making use of what he learns.[1]

This spirit of reverence for what is elemental and natural in human life, and disposition to be guided by it in directing the education of children, is shared by all the great educational reformers. It separates them by centuries from the contemporary philosophers and theologians, and makes them prophets not only of a new education but also of a new philosophy of life. As a general attitude, or type of faith, it culminates, perhaps, in Rousseau. This writer, however erratic and unbalanced he may have been, nevertheless said the things that needed to be said to his generation. To a man of Rousseau's sensibilities, contemplating the French civilization of the eighteenth century, with its formalism in education and religion, and its veneer of cant and hypocrisy covering every possible corruption in civic and social life, the opening words of his *Emile* may well have seemed literally true: "Everything is good as it comes from the hands of the Author of Nature, but everything degenerates in the hands of man." This sentence epitomizes Rousseau's philosophy of education. Man perverts and spoils everything he lays his hands upon. He goes forth with his ignorant conceit, and his false theories of what ought to be done, and he mars the fair face of Nature wherever he touches it. There is nothing to do but stop this sort of thing; revere nature; watch her ways; help

[1] *The Great Didactic*, chap. xii.

her betimes, but, for the most part, let her alone; at any rate, keep out of her way. All that other educational reformers had felt, and expressed in terms more or less general, about the natural worth of the human soul, and the educational economy of making use of its interests, Rousseau literally burned into the minds and hearts of his own and succeeding generations, by his impassioned eloquence.

*Herbart's doctrine of interest.*—But it remained for Herbart, the German psychologist, to think out the mental values of interest, and to formulate them into an educational doctrine. It is here as elsewhere in human experience. Men grope their way through feeling and conviction to a rational explanation and justification of what they have felt and believed. Rabelais and Montaigne felt instinctively the worth of what is original and spontaneous in human nature. In Comenius and Rousseau this feeling became crystallized into a definite conviction. Now, at the hands of Herbart, interest was given a rational explanation, and assigned its place in educational economy. Herbart regarded education as essentially a process of assimilating new experience in such a way as to unify the mental content and make it meaningful and effective. This process he called apperception; and the feeling-accompaniment of apperception, the thing that makes experience significant and so capable of being assimilated, he called interest. Interest for Herbart thus becomes the center of educational effort. It is the mainspring of

attention, memory, and all other mental activities involved in education. If the subject-matter and methods of instruction fall within the limits of a child's interests, he will give his attention to the instruction and assimilate its content. Efficient mental activity is not otherwise possible in education.

*The biological conception of interest.*—From the point of view of psychological analysis, little has been added to Herbart's conception of interest. Various disciples have worked out his views in greater detail, and some have enlarged upon them in the direction of a more comprehensive view of interest. The tendency of Herbart's disciples, however, has been to emphasize the more conscious and intellectual phases of interest, as was the case with Herbart himself. Their reasoning upon this subject has been guided essentially by psychological standards. With the development of the biological sciences, however, and their application to the study of mental growth in the lower animals, primitive races, and children, new light has been shed upon the problem of interest. It is beginning to be seen that interest is not fundamentally a psychological function at all, but a biological function. It is not primarily a mental activity having for its object the assimilation of knowledge. It is rather a reaction of the whole life, consciously or unconsciously, in the direction of those adjustments that insure survival. From this point of view, interest may be defined as *biological responsiveness.* This responsiveness may include every degree of con-

sciousness, from the most elementary to the most complex. Just as human activities range from the reflex to the fully conscious, and just as every spontaneous activity is directed by that responsiveness to stimuli that are economical, so does interest enter into every possible adaptation. It is just as narrow a conception of interest to limit it to conscious feeling of values, as some writers have done, as it is to limit mental activity as a whole to conscious processes. It may be said that there is no practical advantage for education in thus making interest extend beyond the limits of intellectual perception. But there is a very great advantage. The entire question of indirect, or unconscious, education—of the influence of environment, automatically and instinctively reacted to; of suggestion and imitation—hinges upon unconscious interest.

The mechanism of interest conceived as *biological responsiveness* is the organic life, and, more especially, the nervous system. Herein are stored up the experiences of the race that are most significant for human survival, and these racial experiences come to light now in the primary reflexes, now in instincts, and now in the gropings of the intellect. Thus it is that the new-born child makes just the reactions to its environment that are necessary, and through such reflex, or automatic, activities its interests are satisfied. Thus it is that the older child, half-consciously, through such instincts as fear, sympathy, and play, reacts to its environment according to the demands

of its nature, and so satisfies its interests. And thus, too, the adult man or woman, carrying forward the reflex and instinctive activities and interests of the earlier years, adds the conscious, rationally directed activities, and so satisfies his or her interests as intellectually perceived.

*The sequence of interests.*—We have here a suggestion that the interests of life appear in a certain order, or sequence, just as the needs and activities appear with which they are correlated. Thus the child lives first in a world of reflex and instinctive experience. Its interests are confined to physical comfort, to eating and sleeping, to its fears, its repugnances, its sympathies. Then is added the world of sense and motor experience, and its interests widen with its tactual, visual, and auditory sensations. Finally, there is opened up to it the world of ideal relations—of imagination, reason, and conscience—and its interests become intellectual, artistic, and moral. An illustration of the parallelism between interest and organic development is seen in the child's learning to walk. As the motor centers controlling the movements necessary to walking mature, the child becomes keenly interested in every activity that increases his ability to walk. So it is with talking. The speech centers in the brain, and the nervous and muscular mechanism of the vocal organs, reach a certain stage of development, and the child becomes interested in making sounds, imitating the language of others, and so of acquiring

the power of speech. Still more striking is the illustration seen in the ripening of sexual interests. Parallel with the functioning of the sexual centers in the spinal cord and brain, and the changes in general organic development, there appears a vast complex of automatic and instinctive tendencies, which involve some of the most powerful interests in human life. The entire attitude toward the opposite sex is changed. New habits of dress, new manners, and new modes of social activity are formed. Ambitions and the very ideals of life are modified, and the whole world takes on a different shading in its values.

*The atrophy of interest.*—As a corollary of this law of sequence in interests, there is a law of decay, or atrophy, of interests. As with other functions of life, if an interest is not satisfied, it will tend to grow feebler and finally disappear. This atrophy of interests is surest and quickest in its results when the interest first manifests itself. Thus a newly hatched chick will peck at everything that suggests food. Its reflex nervous mechanism is ripe for pecking, and it has the associated pecking interest. But if the chick is prevented from pecking for a few days, it will lose both the power of pecking and the interest in doing so. Thereafter, food must be put into its mouth to keep it alive. When a child has reached a certain stage of development, it shows an interest in trying to stand on its feet and walk. If, for any reason it is prevented from doing so, the interest will gradually diminish and may in time fade out entirely.

This is illustrated in the so-called wild children,[1] who, being deprived in early life of human companionship, have not had the example of upright posture and locomotion. I once saw a little girl of three years who was unable to walk or even stand alone. She would make no attempt to do either and seemed to have absolutely no interest in getting up on her feet or walking. The child seemed perfectly well, and her parents had become very anxious about her. Inquiry revealed the fact that when she was nine months old, the little girl had been injured by a fall, and had been kept very closely confined for six months, at first in her crib and later in a high chair, never being allowed to stand on her feet. When she was at last put upon the floor, she began her creeping just as she had been in the habit of doing six months before. Nor did she show any disposition to do otherwise than creep, even after her strength had been fully recovered. It required several months of careful attention on the part of the parents, in exercising her in standing and walking, to awaken any interest whatsoever in these activities. This law of atrophy through disuse undoubtedly operates throughout the entire range of human interests, not only in those interests more closely related to organic life, but also in the intellectual, moral, and religious interests. It is manifestly of great concern to parents and others who have the care of children that all normal interests be given a chance to function at

[1] Cf. Cornish, *Animals at Work and Play*, pp. 315–23.

the right time and in the right way. There can be no question that intellectual sluggishness and moral and religious indifference are frequently due to an atrophy of interest at those periods of life when the intellectual, moral, and religious ideas and feelings are awakening. It is probably a literal scientific fact that a child's interest in God or some phase of moral conduct is as completely subject to the law of atrophy as the chick's pecking interest or the child's interest in walking.

The biological view of interest, therefore, identifies it with the vital needs of life. Interest is a measure of survival values. The interested individual lives and grows; the uninterested individual dies. That subject-matter in education and those methods of instruction that lay hold upon the interests of children, promote life and growth. That subject-matter, those methods of instruction that do not lay hold upon the interests of children, produce arrest of development and death. Thus does a scientific estimate of the primary economy of interest confirm the instinctive convictions of the educational reformers. The protest of these men against a view of life, and a type of education, that regarded human nature as intrinsically evil, and the great elemental interests of the soul as false and dangerous, was not only broadly human and sympathetic; it was also true.

*Opposition to the doctrine of interest.*—If, then, the doctrine of interest in education has the sanction of

four centuries of educational reform; if, according to Herbart and his followers, it is indispensable to the mental processes involved in education; and if, according to biological psychology, it is an index of the significance and value of experience, how comes it that it is still vigorously opposed as a principle of education and conduct? One reason, and the principal one, has already been given. Real interest is fundamentally a natural reaction of the soul. It therefore comes under condemnation along with everything else that belongs to the category of the natural. As we have found, there was a time in the history of Christian civilization when human nature was regarded as utterly vile and depraved. It is less than two hundred years since Jonathan Edwards, the greatest of American theologians, said: "God has laid himself under no obligation, by any promise, to keep any natural man out of hell one moment. Natural men are held in the hand of God over the pit of hell. They have deserved the fiery pit and are already sentenced to it."[1] Such a view of human nature is certainly sufficient to account for much of the antagonism toward the doctrine of interest. To a man who thought thus of the "natural man," any suggestion that the spontaneous interests of children, who are in the highest degree natural, are significant guides in their care and training, would seem little short of blasphemous. While the conception of human nature as a thing intrinsically evil is rapidly

[1] Sermon on "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."

fading from the modern mind, there are still some people, influential in intellectual and social life, who talk about education and parental government as though they believed in innate depravity. And there are not a few men and women who evince a lurking suspicion that it is not safe to trust the leadings of a boy's interests either in education or everyday conduct.

But a belief in innate depravity is not usually given as a reason for rejecting the doctrine of interest. The more common one is, that to consult the interests of children means to follow the lines of least resistance, and this means to weaken the will. This reason assumes that if a task is interesting the effort put forth in its execution will be less. But the fact is that interest increases effort. A classic illustration of this truth is the play of children. Play in the child's life realizes completely the idea of many-sided interest, and yet it is just the form of activity that calls forth the most complete self-expression and stimulates the greatest effort. Everybody who has observed the plays of children knows that a healthy, enthusiastic boy on the playground is tireless and indefatigable in his efforts. A like principle holds in the work of adults. What man in practical life believes that his efforts are greater and more sustained if his work is uninteresting and distasteful to him? Quite the opposite is true. Edison, the inventor, is probably one of the hardest workers in America, and he is probably

one of the most completely absorbed in the interest of his tasks.

From the point of view of education, the fact that a study is interesting is not proof that it diminishes effort. Interest is indissolubly bound up with attention, and, as Professor James contends, attention is the center of will. Interest, indeed, does not produce the effortless dawdlers in schoolrooms, as every practical teacher knows. It is the indifferent pupils, the uninterested ones, that dawdle over their work; and it is just these who are apt to suffer in a deterioration of will. The truth is there is no really effective effort in education, or elsewhere, without a deep, fundamental interest in the work. Interest, indeed, economizes energy and makes a task easier. But this does not mean that effort is less intense while the task lasts. It means the contrary. And when the task is completed in less time, and with a less expenditure of energy, there is time and energy available for other tasks. No small amount of human energy has been wasted in trying to achieve the merit of lifeless drudgery; and not a few failures in human life have been due to choosing for children the path of greatest resistance simply because it was the most difficult.

This is no plea for shirking a disagreeable task. Things must be done sometimes that seem uninteresting and cruelly hard. But if the life has been made strong through achieving its ends along the lines of its desires, it will face the occasional hard and

uninteresting tasks in the joy of mastering difficulties. On the other hand, if a child is trained under a régime of uninteresting tasks, if it is kept involved in difficulties for the sake of inuring it to hardships, its spirit will suffer from an atrophy of desires, its life will lack motive and intensity, and while it may go through the hard crises of life uncomplainingly and with what seems to be the spirit of a martyr, its fortitude will be due not so much to heroism as to apathy.

But there is another reason assigned for rejecting the doctrine of interest. It is asserted that some interests are undeniably bad. This is true, but such interests come under the general law of perverted functions and are quite apart from the normal standards of life. I have defined interest as "biological responsiveness." That is to say, it is a function correlated with every vital process. If, then, any vital process be perverted, the interests correlated with such process will also be perverted. Thus there are nutritive interests associated with the process of nutrition. The child craves food, and, under normal conditions, this craving has correlated with it interests that are healthy. But through some perversion of the nutritive process, either hereditary or acquired, or through some ill-advised gratification of appetite that has excited nervous sensations which have resulted in a perversion of appetite, it may crave food that is harmful. In such case, its nutritive interests will be abnormal. Or, again, there

are interests associated with the child's emotional life, as those correlated with fear, anger, love, etc. Thus the child craves the companionship and affection of other children, and, under normal conditions, its craving is a healthy one. But there may be some twist in its affectional life. It may be too affectionate, or its affections may seek an outlet through wrong channels. In such case, the child's social interests will be abnormal. So it is with all the various classes of interest. Intrinsically, they are all good. Bad interests are perverted or diseased forms, and the cure lies not in suppression, but in seeking out the cause of the perversion and removing it. A boy's interest in athletics, for instance, or a girl's interest in dress, to such a degree that their high-school work is interfered with, cannot be most satisfactorily regulated by attempting to eradicate it. It is primarily a healthy interest, and has become harmful only through excess. The remedy lies in discovering the causes of this excess and removing them.

*Study of children's interest in secular education.*— The doctrine of interest has now been so generally accepted by progressive secular educators, that the branches ordinarily taught in the public schools are being scrutinized in a new light. The entire question as to the choice and gradation of lesson-material is being reopened. Both educational experts, and teachers practically engaged in schoolroom work, are testing in various ways the educational values of the

subjects taught and their adaptation to the different levels of feeling and intelligence. Thus the elementary interests of children in the qualities of objects, such as *use, action, color, form,* and the like have been studied by Binet,[1] Barnes,[2] and Shaw.[3] The distribution of interests among the subjects of the public-school curriculum has been studied by Taylor.[4] Children's interests in the reading-matter of the school curriculum, as well as their general literary interests, have been studied by Wissler,[5] Miss Chase,[6] and Kirkpatrick.[7] Miss Ward[8] has studied the geographical interests; Mrs. Barnes,[9] the historical interests; and Miss Gates,[10] the musical interests. Play interests have been studied by President Hall,[11] Ellis and Hall,[12] Gulick,[13] Mrs. Burke,[14] and others. The puzzle interest, as showing the

[1] *Revue philosophique*, December, 1890.

[2] *The Pacific Educational Journal*, February, 1896.

[3] *Child-Study Monthly*, Vol. II, pp. 152–67.

[4] *Pedagogical Seminary*, Vol. V, pp. 497–511.

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 523–40.

[6] *Proceedings N. E. A.*, 1898, pp. 1011–15.

[7] *Northwestern Monthly*, Vol. VIII, pp. 651–54; Vol. IX, pp. 188–91, 338–42.

[8] *Education*, Vol. XVIII, pp. 235–40.

[9] Barnes' *Studies in Education*, Vol. I, pp. 83–93.

[10] *Journal of Pedagogy*, Vol. II, pp. 265–84.

[11] *Scribner's Magazine*, Vol. III, pp. 690–96.

[12] *Pedagogical Seminary*, Vol. IV, pp. 129–75.

[13] *Ibid.*, Vol. VI, pp. 135–51.

[14] *Northwestern Monthly*, Vol. IX, pp. 349–55.

more complex intellectual interests of children, has been studied by Lindley.[1] O'Shea[2] has studied children's interests in pictures, myths, and nature literature. While their interests as revealed in ideals, ambitions, choice of occupations, etc., have been studied by Barnes,[3] Miss Darrah,[4] Monroe,[5] and Jegi.[6] The data derived from these and many similar studies yield much concurrent testimony regarding the nature and development of children's spontaneous interests. Their influence has already modified to a considerable extent the theory and practice of secular education. They prove conclusively that the study of children's interests is a profitable method of approach to the problem of rational instruction.

*Interest and religious education.*—In religious education, the doctrine of interest has not been so widely accepted as in secular education. It is much harder to get a sympathetic hearing on such a topic before a body of religious teachers than before a body of secular teachers. A few years ago, in addressing a Sunday-school convention, I made the statement that the Bible material chosen for use in the Sunday schools ought to be adapted to the interests and intel-

[1] *American Journal of Psychology*, Vol. VIII, pp. 431–93.

[2] *Child-Study Monthly*, Vol. II, pp. 266 ff.

[3] *Northwestern Monthly*, Vol. IX, pp. 91–93.

[4] *Popular Science Monthly*, Vol. LIII, pp. 88–98.

[5] *Education*, Vol. XVIII, pp. 259–64.

[6] *Transactions of the Illinois Society of Child-Study*, Vol. III, pp. 131–44.

ligence of the pupils. From the point of view of most secular teachers, this statement was so commonplace as to have in it an element of humor. And yet a man prominent in Sunday-school work challenged it vigorously, asserting, amidst considerable applause, that children should be taught what they *ought* to know in the Bible, and not what they *wanted* to know. At one time, while attempting to collect the opinions of teachers and others as to what portions of the Bible are most attractive to children of different ages and types, I sent a list of questions to a prominent religious publication. The editor replied that he could not publish it, he had no sympathy with such an attempt, and did not believe in selecting Bible material according to the likes or dislikes of pupils. In the early Christian centuries, a stern church Father became much incensed at those who proposed to apply grammatical principles to the interpretation of the Bible, and said he would blush to have the Holy Scriptures subjected to the rules of grammar. So, apparently, would this editor blush to have the Holy Scriptures subjected to the laws of human nature. The most extensive organization in the world for the promotion of Bible-study in the Sunday school has shaped its courses of study from the beginning with complete disregard for the interests and capacities of children. Only within the past year has it yielded to the more progressive element in religious education, which has now become strong enough to control the situation.

The tardiness of religious educators in accepting a principle that secular education has incorporated into its pedagogical creed, is not hard to understand. We have found that throughout those centuries when all education was under ecclesiastical control, theology taught that the natural man was vile and the natural interests of the human heart were not to be trusted. The aim then was to repress and eradicate these natural interests and to create a man that should be conformed to religious, and not to natural, standards. When secular education separated itself from religious institutions, it was more open to the influence of the changing views of human nature. Science became its handmaid, moreover, and has increasingly shaped its aims and given direction to its activities. But any suggestion that the natural processes of life, of whatsoever kind, are not to be trusted and utilized in education is repugnant to science. Hence secular education, under the influence of science, becomes more and more committed to natural aims and methods. Meanwhile, religious education, sharing the age-long suspicions of the church that naturalistic interpretations of human life are wrong, and that science cannot legitimately shape its ideals and methods, whatever it may do with secular education, does not follow the latter in its development, except in the most reluctant and half-hearted manner.

But there are signs of a new era in religious education, as there are signs of a new era in religious life

as a whole. Tendencies that have been operating within the church from the beginning are culminating in a different view of the natural world. Men are ceasing to believe in that sharp distinction between the natural and the supernatural in which their fathers believed. They are coming to believe, and believe fervently, that nature is the theater of God's activity no less than what has been thought to be outside of nature, and therefore cannot be evil. They are coming to believe that earth and earth's children are not in conflict with heaven and the children of heaven. They are coming to believe that the natural man is not, as Jonathan Edwards thought, suspended over hell by an angry God, but rather a creature of God's love and care—not an utterly bad man at all, but a man trying to live his life out up to the full level of his ability and opportunities. And with these changed, and changing, convictions regarding nature and man, the church at its best is now ready to recognize natural processes in religious education, and in the regeneration of society, and to welcome the aid of science in doing the work it is appointed to do.[1]

[1] For more extended discussions regarding the doctrine of interest in education, see James, *Talks to Teachers on Psychology*, chap. x; De Garmo, *Interest in Education;* O'Shea, *Education as Adjustment*, pp. 146 ff.; McMurry, *Elements of General Method*, chap. iii; Dewey, *Interest in Relation to Will* (Herbart Yearbook, 1895); and Ostermann, *Interest in Its Relation to Pedagogy.*

## CHAPTER II

### THE NATURAL RELIGION OF CHILDREN

The view that a child is naturally religious is a part of the same general philosophy of life that underlies the doctrine of interest in education. According to this philosophy, nature is the progressive unfoldment not only of material structures but also of human values. It is a mode of spiritual activity. Human life is a part of the cosmic order, and is subject to the same laws that control the movements of electrons within an atom or the revolutions of the solar system. All that can ever be in man's world is implicit in nature. This is no more than to assert in psychological terms the law of the conservation of energy. Hence those who accept this philosophy, have never found it hard to believe that the natural interests of children are intrinsically healthy, and under normal conditions, are safe guides in their training and care. Hence, too, those who accept this philosophy have always sought in the child the germs of religion, as of everything else that enters into the life of the adult man or woman.

*Natural religion and the doctrine of interest in educational history.*—Accordingly, the doctrine of interest and the belief in natural religion have had a similar history. The latter has received more attention from theology, and the former from educa-

tion. But of every generation of theologians and educators it may be said that the two beliefs have been closely associated both in the minds of individuals and in systems of thought. It is not surprising, therefore, though none the less significant, that the history of educational reform should support not only the doctrine of interest, as we have found in the previous chapter, but also the belief in the child's natural religion. Thus Sir Francis Bacon, whose philosophical writings have had a large influence in the development of inductive reasoning and in the whole movement of modern science, identified religious processes with those of nature. He believed that the rational powers of man's soul are divine and that man realizes himself religiously, as otherwise, through natural means. A more comprehensive statement of this view of human life has perhaps never been made than is contained in Bacon's first aphorism:

> Man, as the minister and interpreter of nature, does and understands as much as his observations on the order of nature, either with regard to things or the mind, permit him, and neither knows nor is capable of more.[1]

Comenius also, whom some believe to have been the greatest educator of the Christian centuries, identified religion with the natural qualities of the child's life. A fundamental principle in his educational philosophy was that the seeds of learning, virtue, and piety are naturally implanted in the human soul. Of piety he says:

[1] *Novum Organum*, Book I, "Aphorism" I.

That the roots of piety are present in man is shown by the fact that he is in the image of God. For an image implies likeness, and that like rejoices in like, is an immutable law of nature. Since, then, man's only equal is He in whose image he has been made, it follows that there is no direction in which he can be more easily carried by his desires than towards the fountain whence he took his origin.[1]

And again, in answer to those who opposed his views with the doctrine of innate depravity:

It is base, wicked, and an evident sign of ingratitude, that we continually complain of our corrupt state. . . . . If we deny that we, with our offspring, are unfit for the kingdom of God, how was it that Christ said of children that theirs was the kingdom of heaven? Or how can he refer us to them, bidding us to become as little children, if we wish to enter into the kingdom of heaven? . . . . We see then that it is more natural and easier for a man to become wise, honest and righteous than for his progress to be hindered by incidental depravity. For everything returns easily to its own nature.

Pestalozzi, the great Swiss educator, whose influence in giving a social impulse to education has hardly been equaled, likewise makes religion a primary constituent of the child's nature. He not only believed in the child's intuitive perception of religious things but he would have this quality of his mind cultivated along with other qualities throughout the entire educational process. He says to the mother:

God has given to thy child all the faculties of our nature, but the grand point remains undecided—how shall this heart, this head, these hands, be employed? To whose service shall they be dedicated? A question the answer to which involves a futurity of happiness or misery to a life so dear to thee. . . . .

[1] *The Great Didactic*, chap. v, sec. 18.

It is recorded that God opened the heavens to the patriarch of old, and showed him a ladder leading thither. This ladder is let down to every descendant of Adam; it is offered to thy child. But he must be taught to climb it. And let him not attempt it by the cold calculations of the head, or the mere impulse of the heart; but let all these powers combine, and the noble enterprise will be crowned with success. These powers are already bestowed on him, but to thee it is given to assist in calling them forth.[1]

Pestalozzi's belief in the innate religious qualities of the child, and his conviction that the development of these should be an integral part of all education, may be summed up in the following quotations cited by Quick:

The child loves and believes before it thinks and acts.

These forces of the heart,—faith and love,—are in the formation of immortal man what the root is for the tree.

Man does not live by bread alone; every child needs a religious development; every child needs to know how to pray to God in all simplicity, but with faith and love.

If the religious element does not run through the whole of education, this element will have little influence on the life; it remains formal or isolated.

The child accustomed from his earliest years to pray, to think, and to work, is already more than half educated.[2]

But it is to Froebel that we must look for the most complete expression of the belief that the child's nature is essentially religious. Indeed, Froebel's entire philosophy turns upon this point. The whole visible universe is divinely constituted. It is the external expression of an internal energy, which is

[1] *Letters to Greaves*, p. 21.

[2] *Educational Reformers*, p. 358.

God. Man is one with God, and is a part of the universal process of self-realization.

It is the special destiny and life-work of man, as an intelligent and rational being, to become fully, vividly, and clearly conscious of his essence, of the divine effluence in him, and, therefore, of God; to become fully, vividly, and clearly conscious of his destiny and life-work; and to accomplish this, to render it (his essence) active, to reveal it in his own life with self-determination and freedom.

Since the goal of man's life is to render the divine content of the universe and his own life conscious to himself, and make himself an efficient coworker with God in the universal process, the function of all education is to help man to this goal.

By education [says Froebel], the divine essence of man should be unfolded, brought out, lifted into consciousness, and man himself raised into free, conscious obedience to the divine principle that lives in him, and to a free representation of this principle in his life. Education, in instruction, should lead man to see and know the divine, spiritual, and eternal principle which animates surrounding nature, constitutes the essence of nature, and is permanently manifested in nature; and, in living reciprocity and united with training, it should express and demonstrate the fact that the same law rules both (the divine principle and nature), as it does nature and man. Education as a whole, by means of instruction, should bring to man's consciousness, and render efficient in his life, the fact that man and nature proceed from God and are conditioned by him—that both have their being in God.[1]

Thus, with much repetition, Froebel, throughout his book, *The Education of Man*, affirms the religious constitution of all nature, the child's included,

[1] *The Education of Man*, p. 2.

and the necessity of basing education upon this affirmation. It is this fact that makes the kindergarten virtually a religious institution, the one really religious institution in our educational system. For the average kindergartner, Froebel is not merely the founder of a new type of infant training. He is the prophet of a new religion that unifies nature and the human spirit. *The Education of Man* is the kindergartner's Bible, and there can be no question but that it is thus far the most complete expression of an educational creed that is religious, and yet has in itself the germs of scientific culture. If ever religious education and secular education are brought into harmony, it will be upon some such basis as Froebel's educational philosophy.

*Science and natural religion.*—The attitude of the educational reformers toward natural religion has been vindicated by modern science, just as we have found to be the case with the doctrine of interest. Science, whose field of work is nature, and whose method is an objective study of the phenomena of nature, is bound not alone by its premises but by the very laws of mind, to discover God in nature, as well as man's approach to God through natural methods. It is a fundamental instinct of the human soul to seek unity of knowledge and belief, as it is to seek unity of life. Hence, from the beginning of its history, science has been implicitly religious. In putting its insistent questions to nature, it has been engaged in a quest for God, and the ways of life that will bring

man into harmony with his Creator. Just as soon as these questions are put to *human* nature, it is found that the mind of man brings to light, in its instincts, and fundamental processes of reasoning, what is everywhere suggested in nature. There is a God—intelligent, purposeful, benevolent—who is working in and through nature, and most immediately and personally in the life of man. That is to say, the divine content of nature comes to consciousness in its highest creature, man. Man is religious because the so-called *natural* world of which he is a part is a *supernatural* world, progressively incarnating the life of Him who is Creator alike of body and spirit.

The first scientists to discover that man is naturally religious were the students of primitive races. Such were the anthropologists, the ethnologists, the students of comparative religion. Whether as missionaries, travelers, college and university investigators, or experts connected with bureaus of government research, these men collected masses of facts bearing upon the religious lives of the lower races, and, indeed, of all non-Christian peoples. These facts were sifted out and interpreted, and the common elements in the religions of many diverse tribes and nations were brought to view. Thus, facts, principles, and laws were derived which constitute the subject-matter of a new science, that of comparative religion; and comparative religion affirms that mankind everywhere has certain instincts, beliefs, customs, and institutions that are religious, and that are

essentially identical wherever found. Such is the instinct to endow all visible phenomena with spirit, which has been called *animism*, and which men like Professor Tylor[1] believe is the tap-root of all religion. Such are the ideas of God and the survival of death, which, in various forms, are universal. Such are worship, burial, and other customs growing out of these beliefs, with their appropriate institutions and systems of social control.

Closely related to this group of scientists are those students of genetic psychology who have applied the principles and methods of that branch of science to the study of children's religious natures. Following the clue to the essential elements of the religious life supplied by comparative religion, they have observed the questions, sayings, customs, and conduct of children, to find evidence that the child naturally shares in the religious consciousness of the race. The results have been no less conclusive than in the case of comparative religion. For the purposes of religious education, they are even more significant since they put us in possession of facts and laws of life that illuminate the practical problems of religious nurture in the home, school, and church.

*Animism.*—First among these results of the study of children's religious nature is the conclusion that the child, like primitive man, is animistic. He instinctively endows the world, both animate and inanimate, with spirit and personality. The rocks,

[1] *Primitive Culture.*

flowers, and trees; the stars, moon, and sun; the clouds, wind, and rain; his own playthings, whether doll, sled, or marbles—are, at various times and in varying degrees, felt to have life, and to think, feel, and act like himself. Careful, systematic observation would doubtless reveal this instinct in every child, although it is manifested more clearly in some children than in others; while, in general, the surroundings and example of adult life tend to repress and obscure it.

The heavenly bodies frequently appeal to this instinct in children, just as they do in the case of primitive peoples. The moon, for most children, is alive. It looks down upon them from the sky. It follows them about. A little girl of five years said to me one night: "Why does the moon always seem to follow us? Does it really see us?" The stars are the eyes of the blue sky, peeping out from behind the clouds, twinkling merrily or moist with the mists of evening. The same little girl asked me on one occasion if the stars did not sometimes wink at children. The large number of poems and prose selections in children's literature that deal with personifications of the moon, stars, and sun, witness to this animistic spirit in children. Rain and snow suggest to the child all sorts of personal qualities. It is hard for them to resist the feeling that a summer shower comes with a sort of personal benevolence to water the dry flowers and grass. A little girl of four years illustrated this feeling on a certain occasion. There was

a thunder shower after a long dry spell. The rain was pattering on the sidewalk outside the house. The child stretched forth her hands toward the raindrops and said: "Come, good rain, and water our plants!" Flowers and trees have individuality for most children, if not for all. Ruth's mamma found her sitting among the wild geraniums, some distance from the house. "What are you doing, Ruth?" "I'm sitting by the flowers. They are lonesome and like to have me with them, *don't you know?*" At another time she said: "Mamma, these daisies seem to look up at me and talk to me. Perhaps they want us to kiss them." On one occasion she said to her brother, who was in the act of gathering some flowers she claimed for herself, "I don't think it nice to break off those poor flowers. They like to live just as well as you do." The boy thus chided by his sister for gathering her flowers, was generally very fond of plants and trees, and felt a quite human companionship in them. He could not bear to see flowering plants hanging in a broken condition, or lying crushed upon the sidewalk. Even at the age of ten years, he would still work solicitously over flowers like the violets, bluets, and crowfeet, with evident concern for their comfort.

Children often personify playthings, personal trinkets, etc. Thus a girl mentioned by Dr. Gould had a habit of caressing some object in her sleeping-room, as a vase, ornamental box, or piece of furniture before retiring for the night. A boy of three years talked to his sled and scolded it for getting tangled

up. Sometimes he would whip his playthings if they did not work to suit him. Once, in a fit of anger, he broke a favorite toy, and then cried bitterly because he thought the toy felt hurt. The anger-phase of animism is often perpetuated into adult life, when grown-up people get mad at obstinate machinery, uncertain fountain pens, and exasperating door-locks.

This animistic spirit in children is the same that inspired those children of nature, the Greeks, to people the oak trees with dryads and the springs and streams with nymphs. It is the same spirit that led the Druids of Western Europe to worship the trees; the Aztecs, the sun; and the ancient Egyptians and Hindus, the waters of the Nile and Ganges. It is the same spirit that works among modern men, in more subtle and refined forms, now in poetry, now in science itself, to give a personal, spiritual, interpretation to nature. We see it in Wordsworth's poems, in some of Kingsley's novels, in the nature sketches of Charles Dudley Warner, and in the writings of physicists like Lord Kelvin and Sir Oliver Lodge. It makes little difference what this tendency of the human mind is called. Some would prefer to name it anthropomorphism; others, perhaps, fancy or imagination. The important thing is that such an instinct exists in children, as among the lower races of mankind, and, indeed, among the higher races—in the poets, certain scientists, and others—where the deadening effects of over-intellectualism have not

blighted the naïve feelings and instincts of the natural man. Such an instinct witnesses to man's oneness with nature—to the great fundamental fact of life, that the energy which throbs in the human intellect and emotions, works throughout nature, with the same spiritual purpose, and toward the same spiritual ends, that give meaning and value to man's own existence.

*The instinct of causality.*—Another result of the study of children's religious nature is the conclusion that the child tries to discover a personal cause, to explain the phenomena of the objective world and its own life. In the language of science, it seeks to satisfy its instinct of causality. In the language of religion, it seeks a creator. This instinct of causality, or quest for a creator, is psychologically related to animism. To endow the universe with spirit is to point the way toward the discovery of a personal agency back of phenomena, and working through them. But animism, properly speaking, does not rise above the plane of instinct and feeling. It institutes no intelligent inquiry as to the cause and meaning of things. The instinct of causality makes this additional demand. It is a function of the rational intellect. It wants to know what power, what personality, brings the phenomena of the universe to pass. It is rooted, like the other elements of the religious nature, in the divine constitution of man. The child, made in the image of his Creator, reflecting the powers of self-activity which his Creator possesses, sees in the uni-

verse a personal, intelligent agent at work. He can no more conceive of things happening without the direction of personal will, in the cosmic order, than he can conceive of things so happening in the human order. He is in the midst of man's activities and creations, and he sees nothing made, or unmade, without the play of human will. How can he look upon the cosmos, of which his own little world is a part, as independent of those laws of cause and effect that condition human achievements?

Hence it is that with children, as with primitive men everywhere, we find the question of ultimate cause, and its answer in terms of supernatural agency. All men, from the lowest to the highest, have been seekers after gods, or God. Plutarch says:

> I have seen people without cities and organized governments, or laws; but people without shrines and deities I have not seen.

Ratzel says:

> We cannot analyze a single race on its spiritual side without laying bare the germs and root-fibres of religion. Ethnography knows no race devoid of religion. Religion is everywhere connected with man's craving for causality, which will ever be looking for the cause, or causer, of everything that comes to pass. Thus its deepest roots come into contact with science, and are profoundly intertwined with the sense of nature. From scientific conviction we must unhesitatingly endorse the verdict of Von Strauss: "Complete absence of religion, true atheism, may be the result of an undermining, soul-deadening overculture; but never the

effect of crude barbarism. This always retains the craving for religion, with the corresponding faculty for religion, however faultily and confusedly this may operate."[1]

Von Hartmann says:

The religious motive of man necessarily demands an object upon which to center its attention. This object is, to use the term in a wide, but, we believe, a proper sense, "God." Employing the term thus, it includes the most primitive notion of the lowest savage as well as the highest conception of the most cultured races.

It is this universal demand for a final cause, a creator, that comes to light in the child's life; and this demand becomes not only a principal factor in his religion, but also in all the activities which have to do with the ultimate problems of intellect and feeling.

A few illustrations will suffice to make clear this instinct of causality in children. I draw first of all upon notes taken on the religious development of a boy between the ages of three and six years. At the end of the third year, while visiting Niagara Falls with his parents, this boy showed his first interest in the cause of things. While watching the water of the Falls from Prospect Park, he said: "Mamma, who pours the water over Niagara Falls?" We may imagine similar questions being asked by the American Indian ages previous, and answered in terms of "Gitchie Manitou, the Mighty." From this beginning, the boy during the next three years seemed to be trying to make himself clear upon the question of where things come from originally, and who keeps

[1] *History of Mankind*, Vol. I, p. 40.

the world going. "Who makes the birds?" "Who made the very first bird?" "Who fixed their wings so they can fly?" "Who takes care of the birds and rabbits in the winter when snow is on the ground?" "Who makes the grass grow?" "Who makes the trees?" "Who makes them shed their leaves and then get them back again?" "Who made the sand and rocks in Forest Park?" "Who made the Connecticut River?" "Who keeps it from running dry?" "Who makes it thunder?" "Who put the moon in the sky?" "Who made the whole world?" "Who made people?" "Who made me?" "Does God make everything?" "Who made God?" "Was God already made?" "Is God everywhere?" Such were the questions asked again and again, with all sorts of comments in reply to the answers that were given him. The question of *what* is the origin of things was seldom or never asked. It was always *who;* and when the personal cause he was seeking was named "God" in connection with numerous objects, he finally generalized by asking if God makes everything.

During the years these observations were made, this boy had no contact whatever with ordinary religious instruction. The development of his instinct of causality was left to itself, such answers being given to his questions, and such comments being made upon topics he was interested in, as his understanding seemed fitted to receive. In most observations recorded of children's reasonings about God,

however, it is not clear how much of their thought is original and how much is colored by their religious instruction. Even where the latter is the case, however, there is always some suggestion of the child's natural attitude. Professor Sully[1] tells of a boy, four and a half years old, who was in the habit of taking knives from his mother's kitchen and using them. At last the mother said: "L., you will cut your fingers, and if you do they won't grow again." The boy thought for a moment and then replied: "But God would make them grow. He made *me*, so he could mend my fingers, and if I were to cut the ends off, I should say, 'God, God, come to your work,' and he would say, 'All right.'" In *Extracts from a Father's Diary*, quoted by Professor Sully in his *Studies of Childhood*, we find this note on the reasoning of a five-year-old boy about God:

> One day he asked how God made us and put flesh on us, and made what is inside us. He then proceeded to invent a little theory of creation. "I suppose he made stone men and iron men first, and then real men." This myth might readily suggest that the child had been hearing about the stone and iron age, and about sculptors first modeling their statues in other material. It seems probable, however, that it was invented by a purely childish thought as a way of clearing up the mystery of the living, thinking man.[2]

In President Hall's study[3] of the "Contents of Children's Minds on Entering School," there are

[1] *Studies of Childhood*, pp. 127, 128.

[2] P. 478.

[3] *Pedagogical Seminary*, Vol. I, pp. 139–73.

many incidental references to this subject. Some children think that God takes the sun out of the sky at night, lights the stars with matches, makes the rain fall, sends the lightning, creates babies in heaven, takes people to himself when they die, etc., etc. And Professor Barnes sums up the topic in the following words:

I believe a child has a native need for a theology, and that if he is not given one he will create it. He early comes to the point where he seeks ultimate origins and ends. "I do not know if Mother Nature made me," said the little blind Helen Kellar, "I think my mother got me from heaven, but I do not know where that place is. I know that daisies and pansies come from seeds which have been put in the ground; but children do not grow out of the ground, I am sure. I have never seen a plant child! But I cannot tell who made Mother Nature, can you?" The following are among the questions asked by one of my little friends when she was between four and five years old: "How did the moon come in the sky?" "Why do we die?" "Why are things made to be killed?" "Who made the first fish egg, and how was it made?" "Where did I come from?" "Who was the mother of the first baby there ever was?" "When the first mother was a baby, who was her mother?" "How did the first lady in the world learn manners?" These are but typical of the questions asked by any child, and a theology serves to merge them all in the larger theological and philosophical problems of adult life. The deeper demand which drove the little George Sand to develop an elaborate theology and ritual, and which drove Goethe, at seven, to erect an altar and enact the part of a high priest, must surely come to imaginative children who find themselves so constantly hemmed in by the phenomenal.[1]

[1] *Studies in Education*, Vol. II, p. 287.

*The instinct of immortality.*—A third conclusion drawn by genetic psychology from its study of children's religious nature, is that the child believes in the continuity of personal existence. Adult religion does not have to teach it the immortality of the soul, any more than it has to teach it the idea of a God. It is naturally endowed with a sense of its immortality. Professor Sully says:

> A child cannot accept an absolute beginning of things, and . . . . he is equally incapable of believing in an absolute ending. He knows that we begin our earthly lives as babies. Well, the babies must come from something, and when we die we must pass into something.[1]

In *Extracts from a Father's Diary*, quoted by Professor Sully, and already referred to, we find this dialogue between a boy five years old and his mother:

> C. "Why must people die, mamma?"
>
> M. "They get worn out, and so can't live always, just as the plants fade and die."
>
> C. "Well, but why can't they come to life again just like the flowers?"
>
> M. "The same flowers don't come to life again, dear."
>
> C. "Well, the little seed out of the flower drops into the earth and springs up again into a flower. Why can't people do like that?"
>
> M. "Most people get very tired and want to sleep forever."
>
> C. "Oh! I shan't want to sleep forever, and when I am buried I shall try to wake up again; and there won't be any earth on my eyes, will there, mamma?"

In my own notes on the religious development of a

[1] *Studies of Childhood*, pp. 106, 107.

boy, referred to under the previous topic, I find this record:

The first illustration of his attitude toward death was at the beginning of his fourth year, when he found a dead bird. "Mamma, what is the matter with the bird?" "It is dead." "What does 'dead' mean?" "The little bird's life has gone out of its body." "Where has the *bird gone?*" It was clear that he had no idea in his mind to which he could refer this new thing his mother was trying to explain, and nothing she said satisfied his questioning. A few hours later, he opened up the subject again by saying, "Will the *dead* come off the little bird, mamma?" He had noticed the ruffled condition of the bird's plumage and was evidently wondering if it would change back to its natural appearance. His mother told him she thought the dead would come off by and by. Then he asked, "Mamma, when you die like the bird, will the *dead* come off you?"

A few months after this, the boy had his first experience with the death of a human being. An old lady, Grandma W., whom he knew well, had died. The same class of questions he had previously asked about the dead bird he now asked about Grandma W. "Where has she gone?" "To God's home." "Where is God's home?" "O, God's home is everywhere—up among the stars, here on earth, all about us. It is an invisible home, to us. We can't see it." "How did Grandma W. get to God's home? Did he come and get her?" "No, he did not come. He was right by her when she died. She closed her tired, sick eyes, and when she opened them again, she saw God, who was with her all the time." "What is in that box they are carry-

ing from the house?" "Grandma W.'s body." "Where are they taking her?" "To Oak Grove Cemetery." "But, Mamma, why are they taking her *there?* What will they do with her?" "It is Grandma W.'s *body* they are taking to the cemetery. They will bury it." "But, Mamma, is God in the ground? Grandma W. can't live in the ground, can she?"

In these instances it is clear that the child could not grasp the idea that either the bird or Grandma W. had ceased to exist. Death might take the animal or person away, but they still lived for the child in a sense hardly less real than when they were before his eyes. One is reminded of Wordsworth's poem about the little cottage girl, who, with several of her brothers and sisters dead, still insisted that there was an unbroken family of seven.

Professor Street, in his *Genetic Study of Immortality*,[1] says of the group of twenty-five children he personally studied: "It is very interesting and suggestive to note that they had no suspicion that their own existence would ever cease." "It seems, then," he adds, "that man has to learn his mortality rather than his immortality." The conclusions of this author, based upon the testimony of deaf-mutes, the little children personally studied, and the self-analysis of a considerable number of adults are as follows:

(1) The concept of immortality has a growth that parallels that of the race; (2) Its origin is the product of the psychical

[1] *Pedagogical Seminary*, Vol. VI, pp. 267–313.

activities of man himself, and not the fruit of a body of innate ideas. *This does not imply, however, that there is not some deep, fundamental instinct, which may have been the dynamic power impelling him to such a conclusion;*[1] (3) In the returns [to questions asked adults] much mention is made of the testimony of an inner revelation giving clear evidence of the truth of personal continuity. It is possible to explain this psychologically as the accumulated heredity of countless ages, joined with the autogenetic longing for perpetuity. However, until it can be shown that there is no teleology in the world, and that there is no divine hand at the helm, such testimony must be accepted, though it cannot be empirically established.

The inability of the child to conceive of its own or other lives as ceasing to exist, may, of course, have various interpretations. It seems to me, however, that it is open to the same interpretation that has already been placed upon the animistic impulse and the sense of causality. It is an innate endowment, an instinct of immortality. All races of mankind have believed in some kind of survival of death. This belief, according to some students of the problem, has had a most important influence in the evolution of civilization. To say nothing of its effects upon the lives of men, morally considered, the customs and laws associated with such a belief must have had a vastly conserving effect upon human society. It is not too much to say that one important measure of a people's racial fitness has been their belief in the survival of death. The significance of this racial phase of the problem has not yet been fully appreciated in the arguments for and against the belief in

[1] Italics mine.

the immortality of the soul. But, in addition, to the racial belief in the survival of death as accounting for the child's sense of immortality, there is the general philosophical consideration already presented. The child is a part of a world-process which progressively unfolds the divine consciousness. God is immanent in the human soul, and God is eternal. The child instinctively feels the values of a life that shares the nature of its creator. Science predicates an instinct of self-preservation as fundamental to the struggle for existence. But the instinct of self-preservation, translated into its religious equivalent, becomes an instinct of immortality, because the struggle for existence is an eternal process.

Whatever interpretation may be placed upon the child's attitude toward death, however, the fact itself is significant. It is an enormously economical factor in the child's life, just as it has been in the life of the race, and must have a similar value in fitting the child to survive in its individual struggle for existence. Its importance for religious education has not been fully appreciated, if, indeed, in some quarters, it has been recognized at all.

*Faith and good-will.*—Such are the principal elements of natural religion that have thus far received the attention of scientific students. They are fundamental factors, it seems to me, in all religion, however highly developed may be the type. If a mind feels instinctively the spiritual quality of things and forces, if it puts a personal, intelligent

cause back of the phenomena of the world, and if it believes instinctively in its personal survival of death, that mind is essentially religious, and, under proper conditions, will direct its feeling, thinking, and conduct according to the religious standards of life. There are other qualities of the child's nature, however, more general in character, which have very important relations to religion, and which are distinguishing characteristics of childhood. Such are especially the qualities of faith and good-will, without which religion, in the Christian sense of the term, is unthinkable. It remains briefly to consider these qualities.

That the child's natural attitude toward the world is one of faith and good-will is evident to the most casual observer. If one considers this attitude in a spirit of scientific inquiry, the feeling provoked will not simply be one of affectionate regard for the naïveté of childhood, but of wonder and intellectual interest. Why is it, that—in a human society where faith is so uncertain, and distrust so common; where good-will depends so much upon selfish considerations, and jealousy, suspicion, and hatred are so apt to supplant sympathy, friendship, and benevolence—the unspoiled human nature of childhood is so full of faith, so trustful, so prevailingly good-willed? Here is a problem that the philosophy of innate depravity seems to have overlooked. And the child *has* faith and good-will. The great religious verities, which we have already found he believes

in instinctively, are felt in such an intimate way that he reacts to them in the spirit of faith and love. That is to say, they are not mere fanciful ideas, or intellectual conceptions, but motive forces modifying his states of mind and determining his conduct. In connection with a child's belief that the animate and inanimate worlds are endowed with spirit and personality, note his sense of companionship with growing plants, trees, and other objects in nature. As one observes his attitude toward these things, he cannot fail to see their influence upon him, an influence that is not simply intellectual or aesthetic, but also moral. He likes them almost, or quite, as he does persons, and his treatment of them is not the treatment of dead, senseless things, but of living, feeling, reasoning things. The plants that he cultivates in his garden, the flowers that he watches in the fields, the trees among whose branches he climbs, the birds that he spies out in the thickets—are all his friends, each speaking to him in its own way. The effect upon his life of such a feeling toward natural objects is beyond estimate. He loves to be among these things. His soul is kept in a healthy condition by contact with them. He learns from them their wonderful secrets. He receives from them suggestions that affect advantageously his conduct. In short, his instinctive belief in the spiritual relationship between himself and these natural objects begets a faith that saves him oftentimes from evil associations, from ignorance, and from idleness.

A child's faith and good-will are manifested also in connection with his idea of a personal, intelligent power in the world. In the latter part of his fourth year, a little boy was awakened one night by a violent thunderstorm. He was much frightened, and called to his mother with trembling voice, "Mamma, God won't let the thunder hurt us, will he?" When assured that the lightning was governed by God's laws, and that there was little or no danger, he quieted down and slept soundly during the rest of the storm. So far as was known, this child had never been told that God protected him under such conditions. It was evidently an inference drawn from his own thoughts about the personal influence he felt to pervade the world. Similar evidence of this child's belief in God's care for him and other people, as well as animals, and things generally, was plentiful. Thus from time to time he asked a number of questions as to whether God liked him, how he took care of his little sister before she came into the world, how he got little children to heaven when they died, whether God fed the squirrels in the winter when the nuts were gone, how God makes children good, how he makes little babies, kittens, etc., grow up and become big, etc. In all such questions there was implied the most perfect faith that God is in the world, keeping it in order, and caring for his creatures in a tender and benevolent way. That such faith gave him a feeling of security and courage in storms, darkness, sickness, and dangers of various kinds, is

certain. In other words, there was present a faith that saves from fear, discouragement, and weakness, and there was a hearty response of good-will toward a being thus able and willing to order his world benevolently, as well as toward a world so ordered.

But the child's faith and good-will go out to human beings in a larger measure than to nature, or even to God himself. His mind has not learned to sum up the finite in the infinite, to rest his faith in things near at hand upon the ultimate cause of things. And so his faith and good-will find their major stimulus in parents, brothers and sisters, playmates and friends. And how great and beautiful is this faith and this good-will? I have never seen in a young unspoiled child any indications of a disposition to doubt the good intentions and honesty of people, to mistrust or suspect them, or to ascribe evil motives to their conduct. That common tendency of the adult mind to think evil of other people, to see sinister motives in their actions, is absent in the child. Even when he is punished, or mistreated, he does not ascribe the act to bad intentions, and he harbors no resentment. Did any parent of a young child, or teacher in the lower grades of the public school, ever see any inclination of the child toward ill-will because of punishment? Do not all angry thoughts go with the pain and the tears, if such have arisen at all? Who is it that first wants to "make up" when these little tragedies of human affection are enacted between little children and their parents or teachers?

The fact is, the world is an innocent, good sort of world to the child. It reflects his own simple, transparent life. He believes in it and likes it. He does not suspect it of wanting to harm him. He is the enemy of no one, and does not imagine that he has any enemies in turn. True he may find fault with people. He may get mad at his parents or playmates, and say or do things that are unkind. He is not an angel, and he often does very unangelic things. But there is absolutely no bitterness, no hatred, no grudge, no harboring of ill-will, no thinking the worst. His faith in the essential honesty, innocence, and good intentions of human nature is, as yet, absolute. His good-will toward everything and everybody in the world about him is abounding.

The significance of these qualities for religion, and life, cannot be overestimated. We have already seen how Pestalozzi thought that "faith and love are in the formation of immortal man what the root is for the tree." The Apostle Paul's majestic summary of human virtues under the rubrics of faith, hope, and love was not only a religious but a scientific statement of fact. The essence of social philosophy is contained in the words of the Angel of the Annunciation, "On earth peace, good will toward men!" And Jesus of Nazareth himself singled out these qualities, and symbolized them in the child, when he said: "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

## CHAPTER III

### CHILDREN'S INTEREST IN THE BIBLE

In the preceding chapters, I have aimed to suggest a certain background philosophy of human life, which, I believe, should be the starting-point in religious education; together with the elements of the religious nature with which such education primarily has to do. I shall next try to apply the facts and principles thus suggested to a study of the subject-matter of religious education, as drawn from the Bible.

*The Bible and religious education.*—It is, of course, a theoretical, as well as a practical, demand of the Christian religion, that the Bible shall be a principal source of religious culture-material. The reasonableness of this demand is not apt to be questioned by anyone who thinks seriously upon the subject. Whatever may be thought of Christianity as a type of religion, there can be no question that the civilization we live in is intimately identified with it. Nor can there be any question that Christianity, in its origin, nature, and historical development, has depended upon the Bible. So that neither Christianity nor Christian civilization can be accounted for without a knowledge of the spirit and content of this book. The children of any given generation of Christians can come to their full heritage, not merely

of religious beliefs, but also of literary, ethical, social, and political ideals and usages that have grown up along with Christianity, only by being made thoroughly familiar with the Bible. This establishes the claim of the Bible to a generous recognition as a great primary source of ideals, facts, and principles necessary to a proper understanding and appropriation of the content of Christian civilization. Such recognition is quite independent of religious considerations, in the ordinary sense of that term. It must proceed from any large view of the many phases of human culture which western nations have made distinctive.

But it is also a theoretical and practical demand of the Christian religion that this Bible, fundamental as is its importance for religious education, shall be used intelligently. It is not a book so completely transcending human experience that, as the mediaeval bishop thought, it is independent of the rules of grammar, or, as the modern religious editor thought, independent of the laws of mind. Whatever theological construction may be placed upon the Bible, or whatever its importance for the education of mankind, it must be brought into relationship with the human spirit through the same channels of sense, intellectual perceptions, reasoning processes, and emotional response that are employed in connection with other types of educational material. The mediaeval saint might clasp his Bible to his breast to ward off the assaults of Satan. The East Indian

mother may still lay her Bible in the cradle of her babe to keep away disease. The fortune-telling type of believer within our own communities may open his Bible at random to find some verse that will decide the fortunes of a day or lifetime. The simple-minded gospel worker may use Bible texts in revival meetings or display them in railroad depots or trolley cars as talismans of salvation. But the average modern mind will no longer accept the Bible as a fetich or talisman, because it can no longer believe in fetiches or talismans of any kind. It has not become less religious or reverent, but more intelligent and discriminating.

It becomes necessary, therefore, in religious education to use the Bible like any other body of literature that must depend, for its understanding and influence, upon intelligent comprehension and responsiveness of feeling. This means that the Bible must be adapted to the pupil and not the pupil to the Bible—that its material must be selected and imparted according to the mental capacity, the emotional attitude, the instinctively or rationally felt needs of the learner. One important criterion by which this adaptation may be effected is the spontaneous interest of children in the material of the Bible, and this criterion I have employed in obtaining the results presented in this chapter. Starting from the conclusion of current scientific inquiry as to the meaning of children's interests, and following the same general lines that have been followed in the study of chil-

dren's interests in the various types of educational material used in the public schools, I have attempted to investigate the interest of children in the Bible. The questions I have kept before me are the following:

1. How do children feel toward the Old and the New Testament, respectively, at different ages?

2. How do they feel toward the various books of the Bible at different ages?

3. How do they feel toward the different scenes, stories, and characters of the Bible at different ages?

4. What is the development of interest in the scenic, narrative, and personal elements of the Bible as age advances?

5. What is the development of interest in the person and works of Jesus as age advances?

A syllabus of questions was prepared in such a way as to bring out, directly or indirectly, the information sought under each of these heads. This syllabus was put in the hands of a large number of parents and teachers, with the instruction that they should extend their observations over as long a period as possible, and should use such special tests as they could in getting at the preferences of children. From the children thus studied by others, and those studied by myself, 1,000 were selected as the basis of this paper. Most of these children live in the larger cities and towns of New England. They are mainly of American parentage, though there are included a few Italians and French Canadians.

They are distributed among all the evangelical denominations, the Congregationalists predominating. There are, besides, a few Catholics. The children range in age from eight to twenty, and are about equally distributed as to age and sex. While the study itself is a tentative one, and no claim whatever is made that its results are conclusive, it is nevertheless believed that the children studied are typical, and that the data afford a reasonably accurate illustration of children's Bible interests within the ages and classes represented.

*Choice between the Old and the New Testament.*— I have based my estimate of children's choice between the main divisions of the Bible upon three classes of facts: (1) Their own direct statements as to their preference; (2) indirect evidence secured through their choice of Bible scenes, stories, and characters; and (3) the judgment of teachers. At first thought, a child's statement that he likes one part of the Bible better than another may seem to have little value. And yet, when we look at the matter from the standpoint of every-day experience, is there not every reason for thinking that the average child, in the Christian home or Sunday school, knows what he likes, or does not like, in the Bible as in other things? When the schoolboy says he likes United States history better than arithmetic, or vice versa, there is no reason for doubting the genuineness of his preference. When the boy says he likes to read the life of Daniel Boone, or the story of Robinson Crusoe,

better than a treatise on physics, we do not hesitate to accept his statement as significant. We adults often forget that children's likes and dislikes are more spontaneous than our own, and that they are apt to be much less disguised. There has nothing impressed me more in looking over the returns received from children than the perfect candor of their answers. This was not always the case in the returns received from adults. The latter often hesitated to express a preference, giving reasons that indicated clearly a feeling that it was not just the proper thing to like one part of the Bible better than another. Every part of the Bible is holy; therefore, the properly constituted man or woman should like one as well as another. The typical child is not troubled with any such feeling toward the Bible. If he doesn't like some portion of it, he says so; or if he doesn't like any of it, he says so. This may be additional evidence of his innate depravity. I merely state the fact. A child's statement that he likes the Old Testament better than the New, or vice versa, seems to me therefore to be worthy of acceptance as an index of his interest. When such a statement is, in general, confirmed by the indirect evidence of other preferences and by the testimony of teachers, one's conclusions ought to rest upon a fairly substantial basis.

At eight years old, the majority of children of both sexes prefer the New Testament; that is to say, 60 per cent. of the boys and 72 per cent. of the girls. The

interest in the New Testament declines, however, during the next few years, reaching its minimum at 14, in the case of boys, and at 12, in the case of the girls. At this point, 32 per cent. of the boys and 40 per cent. of the girls prefer the New Testament. At 15, the interest of the boys remains about the same as at 14, but thereafter it rises rapidly and steadily until at 20 years 88 per cent. prefer the New Testament. The girls' interest rises slowly from 12 to 14, and thereafter rises even more rapidly than the boys', until at 20 years 97 per cent. prefer the New Testament. At 8 years, 40 per cent. of the boys and 28 per cent. of the girls prefer the Old Testament. From 8 years on, the interest in the Old Testament steadily rises, reaching its maximum at 13, in the case of the boys, and at 12 in the case of the girls. At this point, 63 per cent. of the boys and 46 per cent. of the girls prefer the Old Testament. Thereafter, in the case of both sexes, the interest steadily declines, until at the age of 20, 12 per cent. of the boys and 3 per cent. of the girls express a preference for the Old Testament. From 13 to 19 years, some of the boys say they have no choice, the maximum of such being reached at 15 and 16. In the case of the girls, this period of uncertainty reaches from 10 to 17, the maximum being reached at 11 and 12. A graphic presentation of these results is given in Charts I and II.

What interpretation may we place upon these results? To begin with, the interest of the youngest

children in the New Testament is probably not a general interest in that division of the Bible. It centers rather in the Infant Jesus. A child is always of interest to other children, whether in life or story. The scenes and incidents of the Bible relating to

CHART I

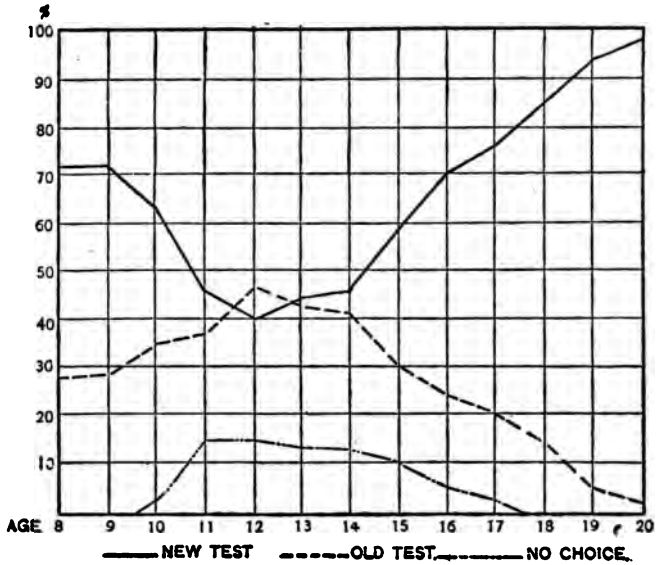
BOYS' CHOICE BETWEEN THE OLD AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

childhood are prime favorites with most of the younger children that have been studied. Thus, the birth of Jesus, the finding of Moses by Pharaoh's daughter, Jesus blessing little children and the flight into Egypt are among the most commonly mentioned. To this natural interest in the childhood of the Bible

must be added the special interest derived through Christian art and literature, dealing with such events as the Annunciation, the Nativity, and the Flight into Egypt, much of which the average child has some acquaintance with. Besides these aids to interest,

CHART II

GIRLS' CHOICE BETWEEN THE OLD AND THE NEW TESTAMENT




we must also take into account the associations of Christmas time, which give the birth and childhood of Jesus a unique place in children's affections. It is not surprising, therefore, that the New Testament, which contains the stories and scenes relating to a child naturally interesting, and rendered more so

by the art, literature, and customs of Christian civilization, should be preferred by so many of the younger children.

This element of attractiveness aside, however, it is probable that the New Testament does not naturally appeal so strongly to children as does the Old. So early as 8 years, 40 per cent. of the boys and 28 per cent. of the girls prefer the Old Testament, and these percentages steadily rise for some years. This indicates that even in the youngest children, to whom the Infant Jesus is especially attractive, there are other forces at work in determining their interest. These forces assert themselves more and more, and during the years from 9 or 10, on to 13 or 14, they shift the center of interest to the Old Testament. How strong these forces must be, is suggested by another important fact, that should be taken into account in this connection. In general, religious teachers lay much more stress upon the facts and teachings of the New Testament than upon those of the Old. As shown by this study, the interest of adults is overwhelmingly in favor of the New Testament. Estimating the child from the adult standpoint, these adults impose their interests upon the children they instruct. Very naturally, there is thus given to the children an interest in facts, doctrines, etc., that is not spontaneous, but derived from the teachers. This derived interest undoubtedly enters into the choice of children. And yet, as we have seen, the forces at work in these children's natures are suffi-

ciently strong to offset the bias induced by adult example and to turn the balance in favor of the Old Testament. *Everything considered, it is probable that the typical boy or girl from 9 years to 14, is more attracted to the Old Testament than to the New.*

There is some light shed upon this matter by the scientific studies already referred to. If it be true that the various levels of instinct and intelligence in racial life have their outcroppings in the development of the individual child, and if we may regard the development of the Hebrew people as typical of the life of the race as a whole, ought we not to expect that the main centers of children's interest in the Bible will shift from the Old to the New Testament as manhood and womanhood approach? To illustrate: The fundamental human instincts may be classified as *egoistic*, or selfish, and *altruistic*, or unselfish. Psychologists are agreed that racial development, as well as individual development, is away from the predominantly selfish instincts toward the predominantly unselfish instincts. Now the Old Testament Scriptures appeal more especially to the former class of instincts; while the New Testament Scriptures appeal rather to the latter. Fear, anger, jealousy, hatred, revenge, etc., are conspicuous attributes of God and men, in the Old Testament; while sympathy, compassion, trustfulness, and love are the most prominent attributes of God and men, in the New. In short, the Bible moves from an egoistic point of view regarding God and mankind,

to an increasingly altruistic point of view. The parallelism between the development of the child and the development of the Bible is therefore clearly suggested, so far as concerns these great central instincts of the human soul.

Again, psychologists are agreed that the human race has developed from a predominantly sensory-motor type toward a predominantly associative and rational type. Primitive man lives in his senses and activities. The world is essentially a sensuous world to him. He delights in everything that appeals strongly to sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell. This explains his fondness for bright colors, massive sounds, pungent tastes, strong odors, and the like. His motor nature is also dominant in his enjoyments, as is shown especially in his fondness for dancing, wrestling, and other feats of strength and prowess. The individual child likewise develops from the sensory-motor to the rational in its nature and interests. In vividness of sense-impressions and in constancy and variety of spontaneous movements, children surpass adults. Gilbert[1] found by testing school children that the great period of sense-development is from early childhood up to 10 or 12. The play activities of children during the same period are very marked, as many investigations have shown. Out of this sensuous and intensely active life of children spring those interests that reveal themselves in

[1] *Studies from the Yale Psychological Laboratory*, Vol. I, p. 80, and Vol. II, p. 90.

a fondness for spectacular scenes, feats of skill and daring, and the general flesh-and-blood heroism so attractive to boys and girls. Studies made of children's reading interests bring to light the fact that in the period just preceding adolescence there is a marked fondness for the heroic in literature. Thus, Principal Atkinson,[1] of the Springfield (Mass.) High School, found that the books read the preceding summer by an entering freshman class were largely biographical, including a range of heroes from Charlemange and Cromwell to Daniel Boone and Buffalo Bill. In general, an ideal or heroic character placed in a historic situation seemed to appeal to the largest number.

Now the Bible illustrates a similar development from the sensory-motor type of life toward the associative and rational type of life. The Old Testament abounds with spectacular scenes, such as the fight between David and Goliath, and Daniel in the lion's den; thrilling stories, such as those associated with the lives of Moses and Joseph; and heroic characters, such as Abraham and David. There is throughout a combination of scenic splendor, striking episodes, and unique personalities that impresses the senses most vividly and appeals to the love of dramatic action. It is true, of course, that the motive of the Old Testament is religious. There was no design on the part of its writers to present a pageant of striking characters and incidents. But the method

[1] *Proceedings of the National Education Association*, 1898.

is, nevertheless, that of the primitive mind, which seizes upon the sensuous and the dramatic, rather than the rational and reflective, elements of life and religion. Here again, therefore we find a parallelism between the development of the child and the development of the Bible.

This parallelism between the unfolding of racial consciousness as revealed in the Bible and the unfolding of the child's consciousness, has further illustration when we direct our attention to the older children included in this study. Here we find that as life ripens into adolescence, the centers of interest shift to the New Testament. From 15 years on, in the case of the boys, and from 14 years on, in the case of the girls, the preference of the latter becomes more and more marked. Now, all the studies of adolescence tend to show that this period marks a psychical, as well as a physical rebirth. The child is born out of an individualistic type of feeling into a social type of feeling; out of a sensory-motor type of intelligence into a reflective type of intelligence; out of an *egocentric* and *sensuous* life, in short, into a life *altrocentric* and *rational*. Hancock[1] has found by experimental tests that children's ability to reason increases rapidly with the approach of adolescence. Lancaster[2] shows that during this period altruistic feeling is extremely active in both sexes, revealing itself in philanthropic work of all kinds. Starbuck[3] and

[1] *Educational Review*, October, 1896.
[2] *Pedagogical Seminary*, Vol. V, pp. 61–128.
[3] *American Journal of Psychology*, January and October, 1897.

Gulick,[1] by statistical studies of conversion, find that the great majority of accessions to the church take place between 12 and 20 years of age. We may conclude, therefore, that just as Jesus and the Christian type of consciousness represented a new birth for the race, so does the flowering-out of the altruistic and reflectively religious consciousness of adolescence represent a new birth for the individual. In other words, just as the personality of Jesus and his regimen of life sum up the ideals toward which the race is struggling, so do they sum up the ideals toward which the individual soul is struggling.

As regards the children who express no preference between the Old and the New Testament, it will be observed that they fall within those ages when the interests of the majority of the children are shifting from the Old to the New Testament. From what has already been said, it is evident that the transformation from the egoistic, sensuous life of childhood, to the altruistic reflective life of adolescence, must occasion a severe conflict of interests. This general conflict of interests is doubtless reflected in the inability, or disinclination, of some to choose between the Old and the New Testament. Teachers and parents often remark upon the indifference of some children during these beginning years of adolescence. As is well known in Sunday-school work, this is a period when children are kept in their classes with difficulty. The study of children reveals the

[1] *Association Outlook*, Springfield, Mass., Vol. VIII, pp. 33–48.

fact that early adolescence is the birthtime of doubts and vacillations in conduct. Now probably these phenomena are due in part to the physical and psychical strain of the period, more intense in some children than in others; but I venture to suggest that all such indifference, doubt, or whatever it may be, is largely due to the conflict of interests incident to the transition from one type of life to another.

To conclude this discussion regarding the choice of children between the Old and the New Testament: Have we not in the development of children's interest in the main divisions of the Bible a verification of an age-long belief? The Christian world has long been familiar with the thought that the Old Testament is preparatory to the New. The historical events recorded in the former have their culmination in the latter. The prophesies springing from the life of ancient Israel anticipate the life and utterances of Him who came out of Nazareth. The laws given at Sinai have their fulfilment in the Sermon on the Mount. In short, in the words of Paul: "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ."[1] This popular view of the relation between the Old and the New Testament is being confirmed by the conclusions of modern biblical scholarship. The Hebrew Scriptures illustrate the general laws of development in the life of a people. Each step in the unfolding of Hebrew institutions, customs, laws, and moral and religious ideals, is related to all that

[1] Gal. 3:24.

precedes and all that follows. The new dispensation could not come till the old had prepared at least a few choice souls for its reception. The words of Paul, "When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son,"[1] have thus their modern reading in the theory of human development.

*Choice among the books of the Bible.*—The data summarized under this head contribute to the same general results as those reached in the preceding section. In addition, however, they bring to light the interests of children from a more distinctively educational point of view. The material of the Bible, as commonly given to children, may be classified under the following heads: (1) historical (including the geographical), (2) prophetic, (3) gospel, and (4) doctrinal. To these may be added the literary, including the poetic and wisdom books. Following the lines of this classification, I have grouped the various books of the Bible for which the children indicated a preference, under six heads: *historical*, *prophetic*, *poetic*, *wisdom*, *gospel*, and *doctrinal*.

At 8 years of age, the choice of the boys is equally divided between the historical and the gospel books. During the next three years, the interest in the historical books increases, reaching in the 11th year 60 per cent. Thereafter, the historical interest declines, falling to 22 per cent. in the 14th year and to 8 per cent. in the 20th year. The interest in the gospel books falls off rapidly from the 8th to the 13th

[1] Gal. 4:4.

year, reaching at that time 22 per cent. Then it rises steadily and rapidly to the 20th year, when it reaches 78 per cent. Interest in the poetic books begins at 9 years, rises steadily to the 14th year, when it reaches 33 per cent., and then falls off more or less irregularly to the 20th year, when it stands at 14 per cent. From 12 to 15, there is some interest shown in the prophetic books, the maximum being 18 per cent. in the 14th year. There is also a slight interest shown in the wisdom books from 16 to 18, the maximum being reached at 17, when the percentage is seven. Not a single boy between the ages of 8 and 20 expressed a preference for a book that could be classed as doctrinal.

The girls also distribute their preferences equally between the historical and gospel books to start with. The historical interest then declines to 37 per cent. at 10 years, rises steadily to 46 per cent. in the 13th year, and thereafter falls to zero in the 19th year. The interest in the gospel books falls to 30 per cent. in the 12th year, and thereafter rises steadily and rapidly to 90 per cent. in the 20th year. The poetic interest appears first in the 9th year, rises to 20 per cent. in the 11th and 12th years, and then slowly declines to zero in the 17th year. Interest in the prophetic books has a somewhat uneven run from 12 to 20, reaching its maximum at 12 and again at 17. Interest in the wisdom books begins at 14, being at its maximum from that age to 15, and then declining to zero at 20. A slight interest is shown

in the doctrinal books from 19 to 20, the maximum being 10 per cent., at the latter age.

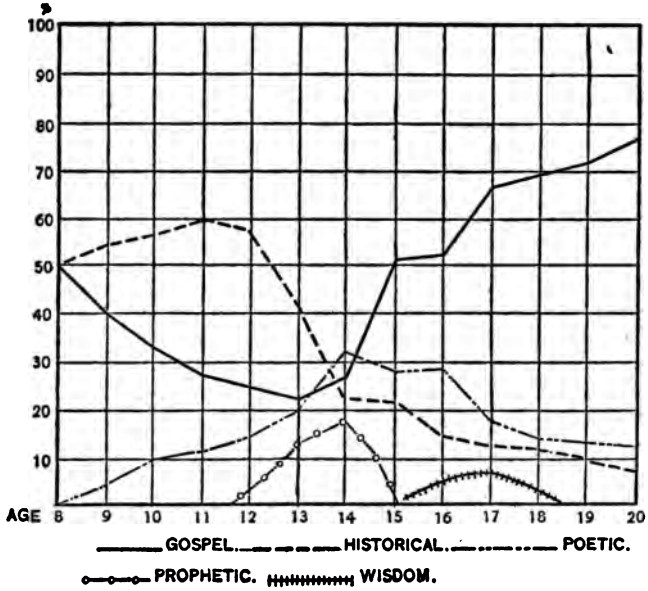
In general, therefore, we have a somewhat wide distribution of interests up to the beginning of adolescence, with some advantage in favor of the historical books, especially on the part of the boys. Literary, prophetic, and wisdom books come more into favor in the years just preceding adolescence and maintain a somewhat prominent place throughout the early years of that period; while the gospel interest stands out conspicuously as the pre-eminent adolescent interest. These results are brought out more graphically in Charts III and IV.

In interpreting the foregoing results, we have first to note that, in general, the preferences coincide with those considered in the preceding section. Thus, the preference for the historical books, which are mainly in the Old Testament, run more or less parallel with the preference for the first division of the Bible. The preference for the gospel books, which are in the New Testament, run more or less parallel with the second division of the Bible. This is not so much the case with the younger children. Here the choice of gospel books is not so general as is the choice of the New Testament as a whole, while the choice of historical books is more general than is that of the Old Testament as a whole. This disparity of choice is due, in part at least, to some children's choosing the Acts of the Apostles, which was classed among the historical books. In general,

therefore, the choice among the books of the Bible at different ages has the same explanation that has already been given to account for the choice between the Old and the New Testament. The preference

CHART III

BOYS' CHOICE AMONG THE VARIOUS BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

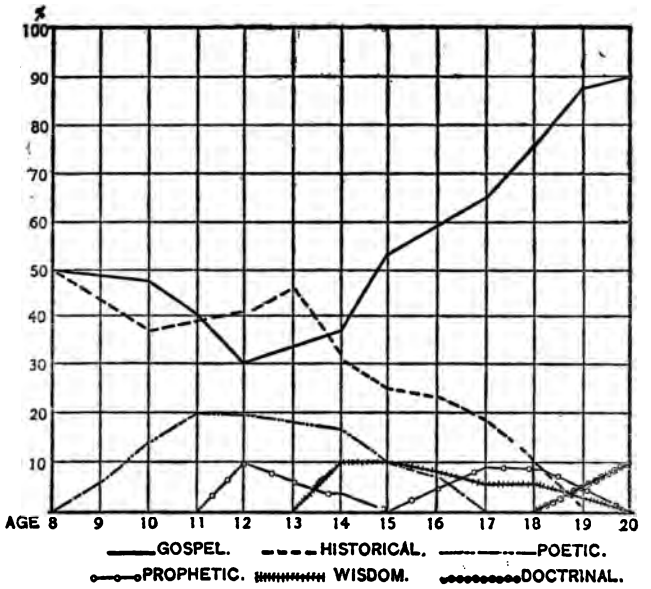



of the younger children for the gospel books is due to the fact that these books contain the scenes and incidents associated with the infancy of Jesus. The preference of the older children for the historical books is due to the fact that these books contain the elements most attractive to the egoistic and sensuous

natures of such children, while the choice of gospel books by adolescents is explained by reference to the general ripening of the altruistic and reflective life at that period.

CHART IV

GIRLS' CHOICE AMONG THE VARIOUS BOOKS OF THE BIBLE




However, we may look at children's choice among the books of the Bible from a somewhat different point of view and in greater detail. First, as to the choice of historical books. It has been found that the interest of public-school children in history and geography is marked during the period from 9 or 10,

on to 13 or 14. Mrs. Barnes[1] found that the historic sense has a rapid development during these years. Her curves are very similar to those shown in the above diagrams. She concludes that from 7 years on, history becomes an increasingly attractive subject for children, though the larger historical interest does not develop, perhaps, before 11 or 12. Miss Ward,[2] who studied the geographical interests of several thousand children, finds that there is a marked interest in places, especially in places that have human associations. I have studied the general school interests of over 1,000 children in the public schools of Springfield, Mass., and find that both the historical and geographical interests begin to be prominent at 10 years. These facts make it probable that children from 9 to 10 years, on to 13 or 14, will be naturally interested in the historical and geographical elements of the Bible. There is also another fact to be taken into account in this connection. There is evidence for believing that children during this period have especial aptitude for memorizing. All those studies that involve a constant exercise of memory, such as language, arithmetic, geography, and history, are more easily taught to children at this time. Street[3] concludes from his study of language-training that children acquire languages most readily from 8 to 12 years. Bolton[4]

[1] *Studies in Education*, pp. 43–52, 83–93.

[2] *Education*, Vol. XVIII.

[3] *Pedagogical Seminary*, Vol. IV, pp. 269–93.

[4] *American Journal of Psychology*, Vol. IV.

found that the memory of children for numbers practically reaches its maximum in the grades below the high school. Shaw[1] found that the memory of children for the essential elements of a story culminated just before the high-school period is reached. Scripture[2] found that the time-memory in children reaches its greatest accuracy at about 13 or 14 years. These investigations indicate that the period of life in question is peculiarly adapted for *fact-studies*, which make great demands upon the memory. And this again renders it probable that children's preference for the historical books of the Bible is based, in part, upon certain special intellectual aptitudes.

Next, as to the choice of prophetic and literary books. "Prophecy" consists of two things as applied to the Bible: (1) the revelation of coming events; and (2) the speaking forth of the deeper truths of life. Perhaps, in the last analysis, these two things are one, but we ordinarily consider them distinct. Now, adolescence is the "Golden Age" of prophecy. It is then that the individual consciousness is reborn into the consciousness of the race. The deeper truths of existence are yearned for and glimpsed. There is a moral and religious ferment, and the loftiest and the most sordid ideals struggle for mastery. Moreover, it is then that the human soul looks most anxiously into the future. Perhaps

[1] *Pedagogical Seminary*, Vol. IV, pp. 61–78.

[2] *Thinking, Feeling, Doing*, p. 251.

it looks farthest into the future. Certainly it tries then, as at no other time, to learn its horoscope. Witness the idealizing, the day-dreaming, the fortune-telling devices of young people. Lancaster[1] in his study of the psychology and pedagogy of adolescence, has collected data illustrating both these aspects of the prophetic spirit. The longing for the more vital truths of life, and the far-looking into the future, recur again and again in the returns received from the youth of both sexes. Adolescence is also the period when literary feeling and aspirations ripen. These are offshoots of the aesthetic nature, and studies of adolescent life bring to light the fact that all the forms of aesthetic feeling and activity begin to crop out early in this period. In the study of children's school interests already referred to, I have found that the interest in painting, drawing, and music increases rapidly from 12 years on. Lancaster found that of 100 actors, 50 poets, 100 musicians, 50 artists, and 100 writers, the majority had achieved success in their art before the age of 20, showing that the life of aesthetic feeling and idealism is well developed in early adolescence. The preference of children for the prophetic and literary books of the Bible, in the early adolescent years, is, therefore, doubtless an expression of more general moral and aesthetic interests.

Finally, as to the choice of gospel books: This is pre-eminently the choice of the adolescent. From

[1] *Pedagogical Seminary*, Vol. V, pp. 61–128.

what has already been said, it is evident that adolescence needs, and seeks, above everything else, some kind of a philosophy and regimen of life. Life has become a thing fraught with a new but vague meaning; the struggle is to make its meaning clear. Life has become a larger, richer thing; the struggle is to learn the method by which its largeness and richness may be personally realized. The quickening of moral feeling leads to self-scrutiny and an apprehension of more or less friction between the self and the best environments. The quickening of the religious feelings begets a desire to get adjusted to the largest and best ideals. The quickening of the sense of life, as lived through others and for others, awakens the impulse to become a part of the great cosmic struggle for more complete existence. In the gospels is found the Christian philosophy of life; and in the gospels is found the Christian regimen of life, in its broad outlines. For the gospels reveal the personality of One who "came that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly," and Christian philosophy sums itself up in personal character. And the gospels reveal broadly the Christian regimen of life, for this is simply to follow where He leads. It is not surprising, therefore, that, when the meaning and method of life are sought with such earnest zest as during the adolescent years, the Christian explanation of what life is, and how it may be lived, should be of interest.

*Choice of Bible scenes, stories, and characters.*—The

data collected under this head bear upon three points: (1) the scenes, stories, and characters that are most liked; (2) the development of interest in the scenic, narrative, and personal elements; and (3) the comparative interest in the three classes of elements at different ages. Preferences were shown for 57 different Bible scenes, 26 from the Old Testament and 31 from the New. Of these, the 15 most popular scenes are the following:

| | Boys | Girls | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Daniel in the Lions' Den | 53 | 52 | 105 |
| 2. The Crucifixion | 45 | 33 | 78 |
| 3. The Birth of Jesus | 27 | 38 | 65 |
| 4. Jesus Blessing Little Children | 13 | 42 | 55 |
| 5. The Lord's Supper | 30 | 23 | 53 |
| 6. Feeding the Five Thousand | 25 | 24 | 49 |
| 7. Jesus Walking on the Sea | 10 | 27 | 37 |
| 8. The Resurrection | 18 | 18 | 36 |
| 9. The Finding of Moses | 13 | 21 | 34 |
| 10. The Raising of Lazarus | 8 | 24 | 32 |
| 11. The Transfiguration | 10 | 21 | 31 |
| 12. Jesus before the Wise Men | 5 | 20 | 25 |
| 13. Jesus' Triumphal Entry | 12 | 13 | 25 |
| 14. The Woman at the Well | 15 | 10 | 25 |
| 15. The Stilling of the Tempest | 12 | 12 | 24 |

It will be observed that all but 2 of these 15 scenes are from the New Testament. Probably this is to be accounted for, in part, by the influence of pictures. Many of the scenes mentioned are the commonest subjects of the masterpieces of Christian art, reproductions of which appear in pictorial Bibles, Sunday-school literature, and the like. It is also due, undoubtedly, to the intrinsic attractiveness of the personality and works of Jesus. All of the scenes from

the New Testament have him as their central figure, three presenting him as a child or in connection with children. The most popular scene of all, however, is Daniel in the Lions' Den. This is unquestionably one of the most graphic scenes in the Bible when given pictorial representation, as it often is, in religious literature. This fact is sufficient to account for its popularity. The popularity of the Crucifixion is doubtless due, in part, to Christian art and to the emphasis placed in religious teaching upon the death of Jesus. It is also, probably, due to a lurking fondness in some children for cruel and tragic scenes. One boy, in describing his preferences, said, "I like anything that has murder and such things in it." It is to be hoped that not many children share this feeling. But there is here suggested a possibility that should inspire caution in those who are disposed to dwell upon such scenes in religious teaching.

The choice of Bible stories has a total range of 38, 23 of these being drawn from the Old Testament and 15 from the New. The most popular of these are given in the table on the following page.

It appears from this that Old Testament stories are more popular than are New Testament stories, the 5 standing highest in the list being drawn from the Old Testament. These 5 stories have all the essential elements that make such productions attractive to the young—heroic characters, heroic situations, heroic actions. The same is true, in a somewhat less degree, of the remaining 5 stories drawn from the

Old Testament. From all that has been said about the egoistic sensuous life of children in the earlier years, we are prepared to understand why the story-interest should center in that division of the Bible.

| | Boys | Girls | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The Selling of Joseph | 48 | 99 | 147 |
| 2. David and Goliath | 50 | 50 | 100 |
| 3. Daniel and the Assyrian Kings | 43 | 41 | 84 |
| 4. Moses and Pharaoh's Daughter | 25 | 44 | 69 |
| 5. The Story of Ruth | 10 | 41 | 51 |
| 6. Story of Jesus' Birth | 20 | 29 | 49 |
| 7. The Prodigal Son | 15 | 23 | 38 |
| 8. Story of Noah's Ark | 20 | 18 | 38 |
| 9. The Calling of Samuel | 16 | 16 | 32 |
| 10. Samson and the Philistines | 20 | 7 | 27 |
| 11. The Flight into Egypt | 3 | 15 | 18 |
| 12. Jonah and the Whale | 10 | 7 | 17 |
| 13. Story of Esther | 7 | 10 | 17 |
| 14. Changing Water into Wine | 5 | 12 | 17 |
| 15. The Good Samaritan | 5 | 11 | 16 |

The most popular story in the New Testament is that of Jesus' birth, many of the youngest children choosing this, as we might expect from what has preceded. But one story in this group of 15 is based upon a miracle, and this probably owed its interest for children to the human elements involved. In general, few children expressed a liking for miracles.

A total of 45 Bible characters were chosen—25 Old Testament characters and 20 New Testament characters. The 15 most popular are given in the table on the following page.

From the foregoing, it appears the three characters most often chosen, are New Testament characters. The boys distribute their preferences equally among

these. A much larger percentage of the girls, however, choose John the Disciple, while more of the girls choose Peter than Jesus. The qualities found in John are sufficient to account for his popularity. He is a gentle, loving, yet manly, character. He is

| | Boys | Girls | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. John the Disciple | 48 | 104 | 152 |
| 2. Peter | 48 | 77 | 125 |
| 3. Jesus | 48 | 66 | 114 |
| 4. David | 49 | 65 | 114 |
| 5. Moses | 44 | 59 | 103 |
| 6. Paul | 31 | 63 | 94 |
| 7. Joseph | 32 | 43 | 75 |
| 8. Daniel | 19 | 36 | 55 |
| 9. Samuel | 13 | 17 | 30 |
| 10. Ruth | 7 | 17 | 24 |
| 11. Elijah | 16 | 8 | 24 |
| 12. Abraham | 10 | 11 | 21 |
| 13. Solomon | 11 | 9 | 20 |
| 14. John the Baptist | 8 | 7 | 15 |
| 15. Mary, the Mother of Jesus | 4 | 11 | 15 |

doubtless also loved for the sake of his Master, whom he so fittingly portrayed in the Fourth Gospel. The prominence of Peter is not so easily understood. Aside from his rugged, virile manhood, we have probably to take into account his unique place in Jesus' regard and the distinction he has enjoyed in church history. It may seem strange that Jesus should rank lowest in the total preferences shown for these three New Testament characters. I am inclined to believe that this is not accidental, however. It is doubtful if the younger children at least were influenced by the theological estimate of Jesus. They probably see only the human Jesus, and if they think

of Jesus as a man, when they are asked to express a choice between him and another man, they do so with the same candor that they show in other matters. I doubt not that Jesus is naturally the most attractive character in the Bible for children of all ages. This study shows that, as a child, he is more often chosen by the younger children than is any other character. It seems to me probable that this preference would continue among older children if the latter were allowed spontaneously to grow into an appreciation of the adult Jesus. But religious teachers are usually so anxious to present Jesus to children as a divine person, and children's minds are so unable to grasp the mystical implications of this dogma, that the human Jesus is taken away from them and the divine Jesus is made an intellectual abstraction. The result is, that the child can love neither the one nor the other. This religious forcing will inevitably shift the interest of a child to a character whose simple humanity it can understand and love. I believe this will account for the preference which so large a percentage of the girls show for John.

Among the Old Testament characters chosen, the most prominent are David, Moses, Joseph, and Daniel. This is what we would expect from what we have already learned of children's preference for the heroic and dramatic elements of the Old Testament.

As regards the development of interest in the scenic, narrative, and personal elements of the Bible, we find: (1) That, in general, the interest in scenes

and stories is somewhat more marked in the younger children than in the older; and (2) that the interest in characters increases with advancing age. Reference to Charts V and VI makes this sufficiently clear. From these charts it will also be observed that the comparative interest in the three classes of elements at different ages is overwhelmingly in favor of the characters. *The larger percentage of children of all ages are attracted more strongly to the personal elements of the Bible than to any other.* This is shown not alone by the preference expressed for characters, but also by the choice of scenes and narratives themselves. Thus, of the 57 scenes mentioned, all but 4 have their center of interest in persons; while of the 38 Bible stories selected, all but 3 owe their interest to the characters that take part in them.

Sufficient has already been said in this and preceding sections to explain most of the above results. The overwhelming interest of children of all ages in the personal elements of the Bible deserves further discussion, however. The human interest of children has been generally observed by those who have studied the psychology of childhood. To adapt the sentiment of the Latin poet, nothing of human concern is foreign to the child. The first efforts of the little boy to realize his artistic ideals are usually pictures of men. The principal play activities are reproductions of the lives of adult men and women. The reading interests of older children run mainly

along the line of biography, or fiction in which the character element is prominent. Atkinson, in commenting upon the reading-interest of boys at the high-school period, says: "The liking for biography is remarkable. One boy read the lives of Grant, Garfield, Sherman, and Blaine. Another read the lives of Charlemagne, Cromwell, David Crockett, Daniel Boone, and Buffalo Bill."[1] Mrs. Barnes,[2] from her study of the historic sense of children, concludes that history should primarily be taught through the biographies of heroic and striking characters. Miss Ward,[3] who has investigated the geographical interest of children, finds that five-sixths of the preferences for towns, cities, or countries reveal a human interest. Miss Ward mentions Anna Buckbee as having made a similar study to her own, with similar results, and concludes by saying: "Does not the strong human interest shown by children lead us to unite with Miss Buckbee in asking if this does not show that the earth should be taught as the home of man?" The sentiment thus expressed is rapidly becoming general in educational circles. History, geography, literature, and the elementary sciences are being taught more and more from the viewpoint of their human interest. In the light of

[1] "A Year's Study of the Entering Pupils of the Springfield (Mass.) High School," *Proceedings of the National Education Association*, 1898.

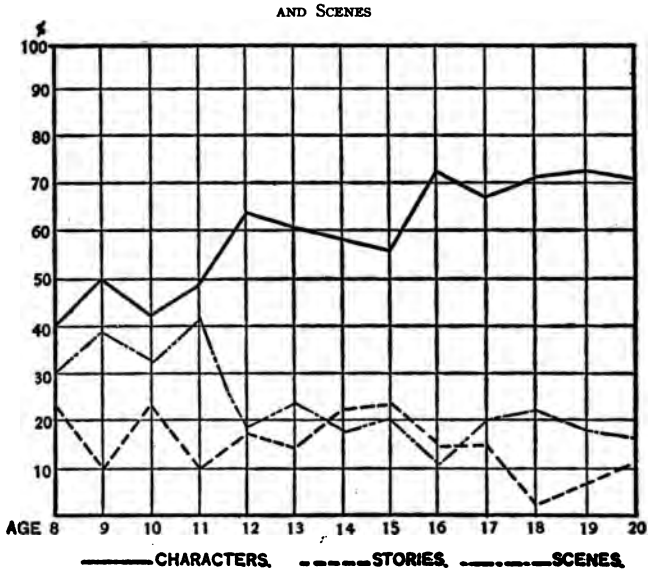
[2] *Studies in Education*, p. 90.

[3] *Education*, Vol. XVIII.

such facts, the significance of children's predominant interest in the personal elements of the Bible becomes clear. Have we not here a suggestion that the Bible, too, may best be given to children through the medium of personal incident and biography?

CHART V

COMPARATIVE CHOICE AMONG BOYS OF BIBLE CHARACTERS, STORIES, AND SCENES

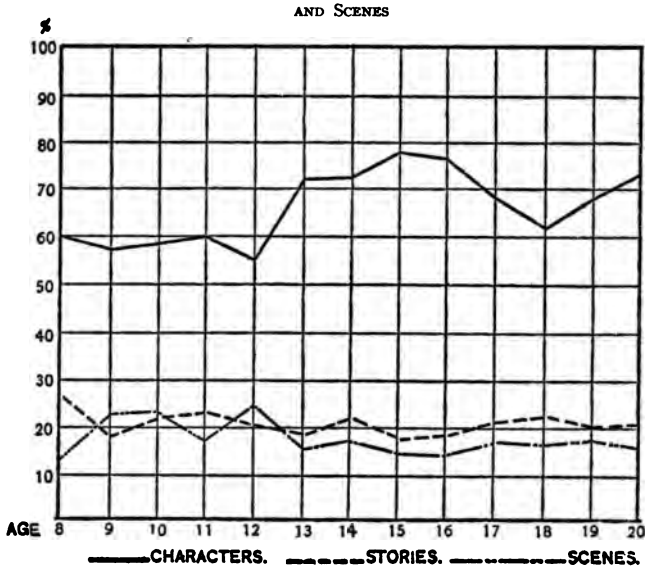



*Development of interest in Jesus.*—Finally, we may examine the data bearing upon children's interest in Bible characters, with a view to discovering whether there is any change from period to period in their regard for Jesus. For purposes of comparison, it will be helpful to note the development of

interest in John the Disciple, and David, the most popular characters in the New and the Old Testament, respectively. First of all, we should remember that what has been said about little children's fondness for the infant Jesus will not hold to the

CHART VI

COMPARATIVE CHOICE AMONG GIRLS OF BIBLE CHARACTERS, STORIES, AND SCENES




same extent in the choice of Jesus as an adult character. In the former case, Jesus was thought of in the environment of childhood. His attractiveness for children was revealed through their fondness for the scenes and incidents connected with that period. In the latter case, he is

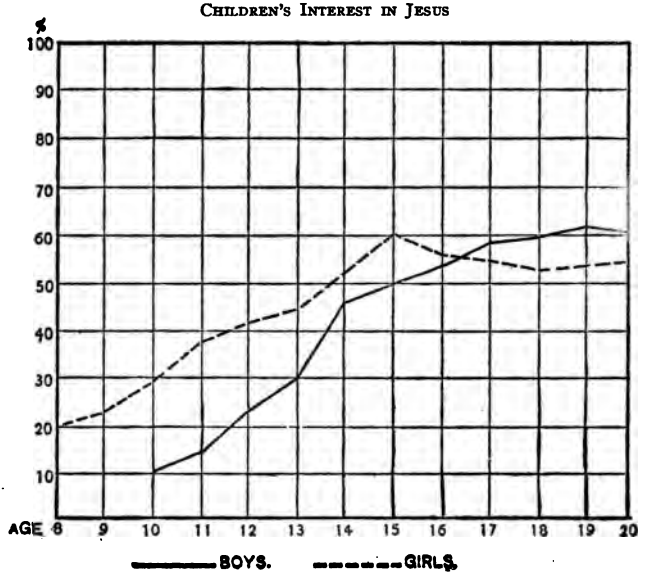
thought of in relation to other adults and to adult environments.

The boys express no preference for Jesus until the 10th year. Beginning at this age with 10 per cent., their interest increases somewhat rapidly up to 14, and then less rapidly throughout the remaining years included in the study. From 17 years on, approximately, 60 per cent. of the boys include Jesus in their list of preferences. The girls' interest begins with 20 per cent., at 8 years, and rises steadily up to the 15th year, when it stands at 60 per cent. Thereafter, it declines somewhat, although remaining throughout above 50 per cent. Generally speaking, therefore, the interest in Jesus is an *adolescent* interest, manifesting itself strongly at the beginning of that period and continuing throughout. The interest in John the Disciple, on the other hand, covers a shorter period. It is mainly an interest of *early adolescence.* In the case of the girls, it rises sharply from 10 years on, culminating at 13, with 68 per cent. The boys' interest rises less abruptly, reaching its culmination in the 16th year, with 50 per cent. Thereafter, in both boys and girls, the curve of interest falls rapidly. Finally, the interest in David is, in general, a *pre-adolescent* interest. It is strongly manifested from 9 to 12, reaching approximately its highest point at the latter age, in the case of the girls, and then remaining constant up to 15, when it falls off rapidly. The boys' interest culminates at 14, when it also declines, the percentage

of both sexes falling to zero in the 19th year. These results will appear more clearly in the following charts.

CHART VII

CHILDREN'S INTEREST IN JESUS



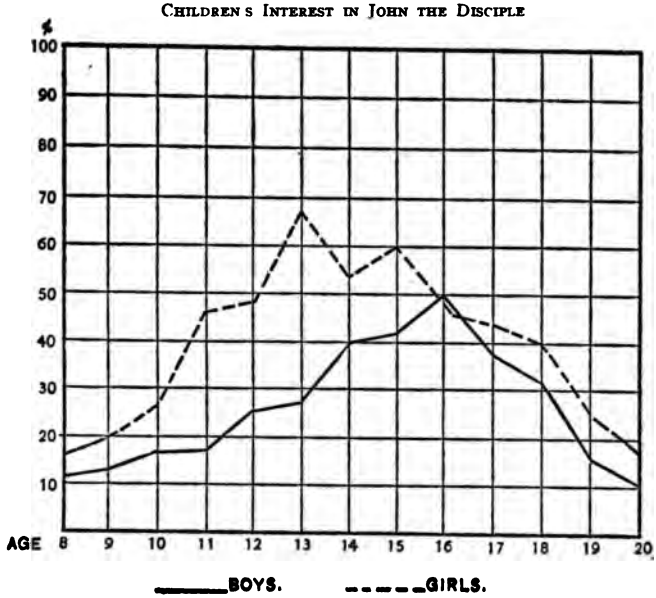

We have, therefore, the outstanding fact that children's interest in Jesus, as an adult, is an adolescent interest. This is what we should expect from the numerous tendencies of this period of life, elsewhere referred to. In considering the general interest of adolescents in the New Testament, we found that this runs parallel with the ripening of the altruistic and reflective consciousness. Thus, it is the opinion of those who have studied the religious aspects of

adolescence that the character and teaching of Jesus appeal strongly to the adolescent mind. Lancaster says:

Adolescents will sacrifice and perform duty for the Master as at no other time of life. Instruction should take the form

CHART VIII

CHILDREN S INTEREST IN JOHN THE DISCIPLE



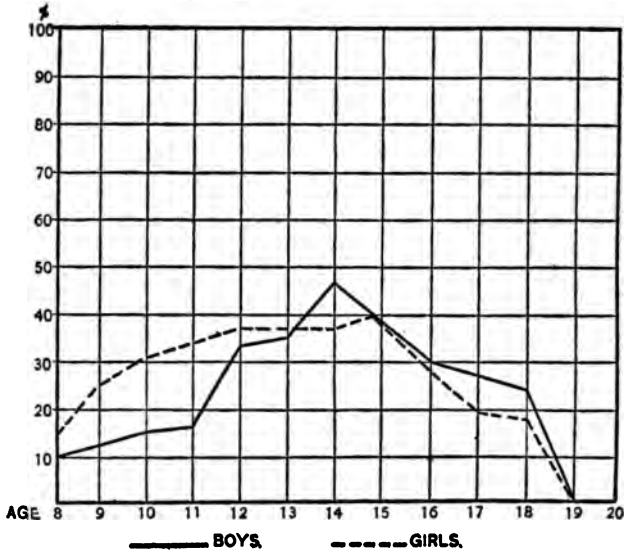

of an appeal to free, spontaneous loyalty to the King, an c Jesus should be presented as the ideal, heroic God-man. His self-sacrifice and self-denial, his suffering and passion may be taught with the assurance that they will appeal most strongly to the soul-life of the adolescents.[1]

[1] "The Psychology and Pedagogy of Adolescence," *Pedagogical Seminary*, Vol. V, p. 128.

This intrinsic attractiveness of the personality of Jesus for young people, appears in what is called conversion. The meaning attached to the latter by evangelical Christianity is essentially the acceptance of Jesus as a personal Savior. As has already been

CHART IX

CHILDREN'S INTEREST IN DAVID




pointed out, statistical studies of conversion show that this is an adolescent phenomenon. Starbuck[1] found that the curve of conversion reached its maximum at 16, for both sexes, though a considerable percentage of conversions among the girls took place

[1] *Psychology of Religion.*

in the 13th year. Gulick[1] found that the maximum for boys was reached in the 18th year, with a large number falling in the 16th year also. In general, these investigations show that most young people who enter the church, do so in the first half of adolescent life. This virtually coincides with the period of maximum interest in Jesus, as shown in Chart VII. The attractiveness of Jesus for adolescents is therefore but one of a large class of phenomena, which the investigation of adolescent life is bringing to light. It would seem to afford another and weighty reason for concluding that this period of life is the time when the human soul spontaneously opens to the ideals of character and conduct which Jesus represents.

*Conclusions.*—The most general conclusion growing out of this study of children's Bible interests, is that it confirms the results obtained from similar studies along other lines, and is, in turn, confirmed by them. This fact goes far toward offsetting any suspicion as to method or completeness of data. It cannot be accidental that children's interest in the Old Testament falls mainly in a period of life which experimental studies of children's mental aptitudes, as well as their historical, geographical, reading, play, and other interests, have shown to be characterized by just the instinctive tendencies and intellectual qualities that the material of the Old Testament most powerfully appeals to. Nor can

[1] *Association Outlook*, Vol. VIII, pp. 33–48.

it be accidental that adolescent interest in the gospels, and in Jesus, runs parallel with the general altruistic and religious interests brought to light by the various studies of adolescence. It seems to me, therefore, that this concurrence of results does two things: (1) It vindicates the point of view and method of the present study; and (2) it serves to strengthen the conclusions which the study suggests. These conclusions are as follows:

1. Children up to 8 or 9 years are more interested in the portions of the New Testament which give accounts of the birth and childhood of Jesus. They are interested, however, in Old Testament stories relating to the childhood or youth of characters like Moses, Samuel, Joseph, and David. This suggests that children of this age should be given instruction in the Bible from the viewpoint of the childhood of the Bible, beginning with Jesus and using the others for purposes of comparative study. Of course, such material would serve only as the nucleus of the primary curriculum. Around this could be grouped a great diversity of material derived from studies in nature, art, industries, and other departments of human life, so selected and presented as to give the children a religious outlook upon their environment. A great deal of the material of the corresponding grades of the public schools could be appropriated, and given an ethical and religious interpretation. This could be done most effectively, as it seems to me, through the medium of this great World-Soul, who summed up in His character and life all the

most fundamental human interests, who came into the world through the gateway of childhood, and who said: "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

2. From 9 years, on to 13 or 14, children are more interested in the Old Testament. This interest shows itself more especially in a fondness for the historical books, the literary and prophetic books, and the heroic and dramatic elements generally. This suggests that the religious curriculum for this period should occupy itself with the history, geography, literature, prophecy, and general moral and religious contents of the first division of the Bible. It would coincide with the grades of public-school work above the primary and below the high school, in that it would deal essentially with *fact-studies*. It would really mark the beginning of formal biblical instruction, the instruction of the earlier period being more general and unsystematic. The order of material would be: (1) history and geography, (2) literature, and (3) prophecy. The moral and religious elements would be involved throughout. Incidentally, the history of other ancient peoples, and, at least, the elements of comparative religion could be taught. Much might profitably be made of the manners and customs, and the social life, especially as reflected in the industries, religious and political ceremonials, and feats of arms. Sacred art might be brought into requisition to aid in the study of

characters and customs. This is the period for memorizing selected passages of Scripture, such as Psalms, Proverbs, etc.

3. Children in the adolescent period show a decided interest in the New Testament, especially in the four gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. They also show a very special interest in Jesus and the principal disciples. The interest in John the Disciple, is an early adolescent interest, while the interest in Jesus culminates somewhat later, and is sustained throughout. This suggests that the material of instruction for adolescence should be derived largely from the New Testament. It would center in Jesus and his teachings, the principal disciples being studied incidentally. The study of types of Christian character and the development of Christian thought and institutions might very profitably be extended to the later history of Christianity. Every possible sidelight of history, literature, art, and science could be utilized in revealing the ideals of Christian manhood and Christian society. The religious instruction of this period should, it seems to me, aim to establish a correct personal relationship with the Divine Father and with society. Altruistic and religious feelings should be made use of to stimulate and guide a spirit of co-operation with God and men.

4. At all ages, children feel more interest in persons than in any other elements of the Bible. Even Bible scenes and stories appeal to them mainly

through the man, woman, or child that is the center of the scene or the principal actor in the story. This suggests that the Bible should be given to children, of all ages, through its personal element. Thus, the Bible should be given to young children through the child Jesus. Everything in either the Old or the New Testament that could be properly used to make this human child Jesus intelligible and lovable should be employed. No theological explanation of his birth, nature, or mission need be attempted. The spontaneous love of one child for another may be trusted to give Jesus a secure place in the affections of children, if he is presented simply and attractively. And it is better that the affections should be enlisted in this matter than the intellect. God, whom the little child should have already come to know through its sense of causality as instructed by older people, may be given anew to it as the Father of this Child of Bethlehem, whom so large a portion of mankind loves and serves. But, whatever the theological belief of parents or teachers, there can be no economy, at this early period, in making God and Jesus the persons of a mystical trinity. They should be kept separate in the child's thought, as Father and Child, each standing for what such terms connote. Any attempt to invest Jesus with the mysteries of divine incarnation and sacrificial function must, it seems to me, detract from his simplicity and lovableness in the estimation of little children.

Again, the Bible should be given to children from

8 or 9 years, on to 13 or 14, through the heroes of the Old Testament. These heroes may be selected with especial reference to their importance to history or prophecy, or with reference to their moral and religious example. The number is sufficiently large to give ample choice in these directions. When such a selection of heroes has been made, their characters, deeds, and sayings may become the media through which the children shall be taught Hebrew history and geography, moral and religious principles, and anything else that the Old Testament can supply for purposes of religious instruction. Finally, the Bible should be given to adolescents through Jesus as an adult, and, incidentally, through the disciples and apostles who have interpreted his character and teachings. Here, again, all historical or geographical material, all doctrines and exhortations, all individual and social elements of ethics or religion that the New Testament presents, should be taught through the personal medium most closely identified with them. In Trinitarian circles, this would be the time to give the theological interpretation of Jesus' character and function. Having established the human Jesus in the affections of childhood, and having guided the child throughout the intervening years along the lines of a healthy, normal life which finds the fulfilment of its ideals in this same Jesus, any doctrines of the Godhead or the atonement that may seem necessary to a religious philosophy, may be added. In any case, the spontaneous interest in

Jesus should be seized upon to bring the adolescent lives into harmony with him, and to make his teachings effective in establishing a correct regimen of conduct as it affects the self and others.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PROBLEM OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

*Complexity of the problem.*—The problem of religious education has never been so complex and difficult to formulate as it is at present. No statement has yet been made of the aims, subject-matter, and methods of religious education, in terms of modern knowledge, and the felt needs of modern life, that is generally satisfactory. Such a statement will not here be attempted. I hope only to sketch some of its outlines in the light of the principles discussed in the preceding chapters, and certain generally accepted conclusions of secular education.

In the earlier generations of Christianity, when it was believed that men's religious life could be compassed by a body of religious doctrines, the problem of religious education was comparatively simple. Instruction in a catechism, the memorizing of theological statements of belief, and the formal assent to dogmas thought to be essential to salvation, sufficed for such education. Still later, when religious instruction was based upon the Bible, and the subject-matter consisted of Scripture passages, selected more or less with reference to denominational ends, and presented through the medium of formal questions and answers, the problem was hardly more difficult. In both these types of religious education,

the aim in view was definite and immediate, namely, to indoctrinate the child with religious beliefs and get him formally identified with the church. The subject-matter likewise was prescriptive and simple in character. It was necessary only to draw upon the historic creeds, or select passages of Scripture according to certain standards of faith and practice. In some religious communities, such conceptions of the aim and subject-matter of religious education still survive, and here, of course, the problem is a simple one.

But wherever religious communities have felt the influence of modern learning, and the example of secular education, and wherever, as a result, enlarged conceptions of man's religious nature have been formed, the problem of religious education has grown accordingly. In such communities religious education is repeating the history of secular education. The vastly enlarged knowledge of human nature and its needs, the increased complexity of civilization, the enormously enriched body of culture-material available and the clash between older standards and instruments of education and the newer standards and instruments which current life seem to demand—all unite to make the problem of education increasingly complex, and create confusion and divided counsel in educational circles. Just so in religious education, which must participate in the general movement of modern knowledge and civilization, has there resulted confusion and divided

counsel. In both cases, education, like the civilization it is a part of, is in a state of transition. With increasing knowledge and complexity of life, ideals, programmes, and institutions must change. It is not to be wondered at, under such conditions, if educators of all types are in doubt as to just what elements will finally enter into the problem of education.

How far the present generation has departed from the earlier conceptions of religious education, which were largely satisfied with doctrinal instruction, may be seen in the work of the Religious Education Association. At the third convention of this organization, held at Boston in 1905, the entire programme was devoted to formulating the aims of religious education. So broadly diverse were the discussions that they touched upon every phase of religious and ethical life, and reflected the work of every type of social institution that is dedicated to the work of spiritualizing mankind. Two years later, at the fourth convention, held at Rochester, N. Y., the entire programme was occupied with discussions regarding the material of religious education. There was here the same breadth and catholicity of views as in the previous convention. Every type of culture-material, from the Bible to the play-ground, was presented as having value in the religious education of children. All this marks a significant change from the conceptions of religious education held by the early catechists, or even by the makers of Sunday-school lessons a generation ago.

*Suggestions from secular education.*—In considering the problem of religious education, we may start with certain principles and ideals that are now generally accepted in secular education. Here we find that, amidst all the conflicting opinions as to aim and material of education, a few great fundamental conclusions have been forced upon educators by modern science. These conclusions, with varying terminology, have begun to find expression in a new educational philosophy.

1. Education is a part of man's effort to do what nature is always trying to do for him. It is the will to live, become effective through specially devised institutions and curricula of study. It is conscious adjustment to a progressive environment. It is a preparation for life, and a medium of more complete living while this preparation is being made. It is a social agency by which each new generation of children is put in possession of its racial heritage, while at the same time being enabled to realize its own selfhood as a new generation.

2. Education can be accomplished only through interactions between the mind and the objective world. It depends primarily upon things experienced, and not upon words which symbolize the things experienced. It must be motor, as well as sensory and reflective. It must occupy itself not only with stimulating feeling and imparting ideas, but also with securing adequate expression for these feelings and ideas through conduct.

3. Education involves complete self-expression. Knowledge does not become a possession until it is reacted to personally. Mind, and life itself, have, in the last analysis, two modes of functioning: They receive from the outside world, and they make some kind of response to the world they receive from. Health, growth, and efficiency depend upon maintaining a proper balance between these two functions. If the receptive function exceeds that of response, there is decay of the power to do, while the thinking and feeling processes become feeble, or perverted. If the responsive function is not in harmony with the receiving function, action and conduct become false and the reflex effect upon character is to destroy it.

These general conclusions suggest the problem of secular education, as regards aim, subject-matter, and method. They are equally applicable to religious education, and we may safely follow their direction in sketching the problem with which the latter is concerned.

*The aim of religious education.*—If the aim of education in general may be summarized as *adjustment to a progressive environment*, the aim of religious education may be summarized as *religious adjustment to a progressive environment.*[1] That is to say, the distinction between secular education and

[1] By "environment" is meant the things and forces that ultimately condition life. By "progressive environment" is meant these things and forces under increasingly complex and perfected aspects.

religious education is not one of environment but of adjustment. The environment of a *secular* man and of a *religious* man is intrinsically the same. The environment of a *religious* man is the same, whether he be at his place of business or in a church pew. There is but one universe and but one set of laws governing it. There is but one law of gravity, and one law of good and evil. Environment is one, as the world is one. But man's adjustment to this environment may vary. It may be a business adjustment, an intellectual adjustment, a religious adjustment. The difference lies in the attitude one takes toward environment, the interpretation he places upon it, and the use to which he applies it. Religious education, therefore, has for its function the effecting of such an adjustment between human life and its environment as will lead men to take a religious attitude toward that environment, interpret it religiously, and use it for the larger ends toward which all rational conduct is directed.

Let us note in some detail what this would mean for religious education. We may take as an illustration the radical change it would involve in the attitude toward nature, natural laws, and the natural impulses and aptitudes of the soul. For the things and forces that are described by the term "natural," constitute the most constant and obvious forms of environment. In the chapter on "Interest and Education," and again in that on "The Natural Religion of Children," we have found that the trend

of educational history and of scientific knowledge is toward a view of human life that identifies it more and more completely with what have been called "natural" processes. We are now ready to follow up this clue and seek out its religious implications.

What, then, would be the result if a religious adjustment should be effected between the human mind and nature such as would harmonize with this trend in educational history and scientific knowledge? In general, nature would come to be regarded from a religious point of view, would be interpreted religiously, and would be used for the larger and more spiritual purposes of life. This means that God would be identified with nature. The so-called natural laws would be regarded as God's laws. The supernatural would no longer be set over against the natural. The scientific law of the conservation of energy would be interpreted as a divine law, efficient in the world of spirit as in the world of matter, and all disposition to abrogate this divine law in the interest of human desires and whims would be abandoned. This means, too, that natural laws, operating in the human body and mind, as elsewhere, would be reverenced. Men would then look upon the violation of a law of health with at least as much horror as the violation of a church ordinance. They would broaden their view of sin to include all the gratifications of appetite that destroy physical vigor, and all the slothfulness of mind that perpetuate ignorance and prejudice. They would, in short,

eat religiously, clothe themselves religiously, found homes religiously, establish business and professional relationships religiously, and conduct all the enterprises of individual and social life from a religious point of view.

Shall it be said that there is already such a conception of religious adjustment to nature, directing the activities of the Sunday school and church? That series of sermons is rare, that course of religious instruction is rare, that does not suggest to the minds of children and adults that the "natural" and the "supernatural" are antagonistic, and that religion has little, or nothing, to do with the natural order of things. Within three months, I have heard as many sermons that drew a sharp distinction between the natural development of the child and the religious development. That is to say, God's work in human life was made to begin with special acts entirely outside of natural processes of mind. If this is not to separate God from the natural world, what can so separate him? The result is, the most widespread confusion in thinking and conduct. In St. Petersburg there is today (August, 1908) an epidemic of cholera. Hundreds are dying daily, and the distress and social chaos resulting from such an epidemic are showing their effects in every department of Russian life. What are the respective attitudes of science and Russian religion toward this natural phenomenon of cholera infection? Science says the river Neva is foul with cholera germs, the

people are ignorant and careless, and the officials are remiss in their duties. The epidemic is due to polluted drinking-water and to general unsanitary conditions and habits of the people. Until these causes are removed, the epidemic must continue. The Russian priesthood says the epidemic is a punishment inflicted upon the Russian people for their sins in neglecting the ordinances of the church. They pay no attention to the polluted waters of the Neva, or the unsanitary conditions of the city. They offer prayers, instead, and exhort the people, not to greater care in obtaining their drinking-water and to greater cleanliness, but to rites of expiation for their sins.

At the present moment, an extensive drouth is afflicting large sections of the United States. Streams of water are failing, mills are shutting down, forest fires are raging, wells are drying up, and general anxiety is felt as to the effects upon business, property, and life. Here is a situation more complex, perhaps, than the epidemic of cholera in St. Petersburg. Weather phenomena are not so well understood as are those of disease. And yet it is probable that the more intelligent section of our population find a rational explanation for this drouth. Rainfall depends upon such causes as the evaporation of moisture from the earth's surface, the temperature of the atmosphere, the movement of air-currents, etc. There is very good reason why there should be no rainfall in a desert, and why, again, there should be

heavy rainfalls in certain other sections of the earth. No person with adequate knowledge and imagination, to say nothing of reverence, would think of holding God responsible for a drouth, with all its consequences of inconvenience and suffering. Nevertheless, we read in the daily press that in various places clergymen are assembling their congregations to pray for rain. What can be the mental state of these people who put God outside the natural processes of this world and think of him as either allowing, or causing, these processes to result in human distress, until his attitude is changed through the prayers of the afflicted?

The practical results of such views of nature and God are enormous. If a man's conscious relations to God are the core of his religion, and if his relations to nature are the immediate and vital concern of his daily life, is it any wonder that he gives up either his religion or his regard for natural law when these two things are not brought into harmony? That there are thousands of men and women in Christian communities who are in just this condition, is perfectly evident. On the one hand there are those who try to get their lives conformed to the requirements of natural law without being religious, at least in the ordinary sense of that term. On the other hand there are those who try to be religious without conforming their lives to natural law. The extremes of these classes of people are illustrated on the one hand by the irreligionist and on the other by the Chris-

tian Scientist. The former has given up the idea of God, the latter has given up all regard for the natural order of things.

This confusion of the understanding, and division of the great interests of life, begin in childhood, and defective education is largely responsible for it. Secular education, so-called, attempts to give the child his knowledge of the world in terms of the natural. It excludes all reference to supernatural origins and control of natural phenomena, and answers none of the questions we have found to spring from the natural religion of childhood. Religious education, so-called, attempts to give the child his knowledge of the world in terms of the supernatural. It excludes all reference to natural origins and control of supernatural phenomena. Neither attempts to educate the child into a point of view that the natural and the supernatural are not mutually exclusive. Thus the child is bewildered if he thinks at all; and if his understanding is so juggled with that he attempts no independent thinking, the results are equally bad. A boy of twelve years has had several terms of nature-study in the public schools, and is more or less rationalized in his attitude toward nature. He knows the elements of meteorology, and if asked to explain the cause of a drouth, he would give the explanation in terms of distribution of water-areas, forests, temperature, air-currents, and the like. But he attends church on Sunday and hears the pastor pray for rain. He

goes to Sunday school and is taught that God interposes, upon the proper request of men and women, and suspends the operation of natural forces, or changes their direction. What reconciliation can he make between this kind of divine relationship to the natural order, and the facts he has been taught in the public school? Is it any wonder that he should become mentally, and even sometimes morally, confused? If the processes of nature can be changed by the request of a clergyman or a Sunday-school teacher, what assurance has this boy that there is enough fixity in natural law to insure his own safety? Is it strange that young people growing up under such conflicting instruction, should ultimately be driven to one or the other extreme already mentioned?

I have dwelt thus lengthily upon this question of God's relation to natural law because it is typical of a large number of questions that must be disposed of before religious education can so much as define its aims. What profits it for a man to be religious at all, if he lives in a world where health and disease, sanity and insanity, intelligence and ignorance, thrift and improvidence depend upon the operation of natural laws, and yet the content of his religion—his God, his heaven, his worship—transcend these conditions, and neither stimulate him to master them nor help him in his impotent struggle against them? Surely the first aim of religious education should be to give children the kind of God that they

can identify with the natural world in which they live, and the kind of attitude toward natural law as conditioning their physical and psychical powers which will make them reverently, and religiously, obedient to its demands.

*Material of religious education.*—The material of religious education is determined by its aim. If, then, the aim is to effect a religious adjustment between the child and his environment, the material should be any, and all, elements of that environment. That is to say, everything in a child's surroundings should be interpreted religiously, and be made to yield religious instruction. Some elements of the environment of Christian civilization are more easily converted to this use than others. They have more definite religious associations; their character is such as will yield a religious content more readily. Such are the Bible and religious literature generally. Such, too, is the church with all its rites and observances. No question is likely to be raised as to the necessity of including these elements in the culture-material of religion. But they are not sufficient. They are only a part of the environment of life. The remainder of that environment must be utilized religiously if it is to have a religious significance for the child at all. Thus science, art, literature, history, the experiences of daily life—everything that comes within the environment of children—should be appropriated to religious uses. In no other way can the whole world be made to reveal its divine

authorship, and to have a meaning that transcends the order of time and sense. If it be said that this makes the problem of religious educational material hopelessly complex, the reply is that it is readily solved by intelligent selection. Secular education must regard the whole of human environment, except such elements as have been peculiarly associated with religion. It is solving the problem of selecting typical forms of knowledge. Religious education could do as much.

In brief, the ideal religious curriculum would be a body of material that summarized so-called secular knowledge and so-called religious knowledge and put the whole to religious use. If, as has been pointed out, there is but one world for the secular and for the religious life alike, and if the religious and secular concerns of men are merely different modes of reacting to the same world, then there is no other rational view to take of the material of religious education. This means that a thoroughly rational programme of religious education would differ from existing programmes of secular education only in the inclusion of the distinctive religious literatures of the world, and a more definitely religious attitude toward all bodies of knowledge. If this seems to blur the distinction between religious education and secular education, it may be acknowledged at once that such is its intent. If the public schools interpreted human experience to children in terms of religion, there would be no excuse for the existence of Sunday

schools. But since men, in their ignorance and prejudice, have decreed that they will have their children educated in such an irrational, dualistic manner, it remains for religious educators to do what secular educators are not doing—give to each generation of children their *entire* heritage of racial experience, in terms that compass the needs of their *whole* life.

The failure of religious educators to make their curricula sufficiently broad has been due to a narrowness of aim. So long as it is sought merely to adjust the life to a particular creed, or certain interpretations of the Bible, the choice of religious culture-material will be exclusively ecclesiastical and biblical. The penalty of thus narrowing the choice of the material of religious education is a heavy one and is now being exacted to the full. The present generation is subjecting creeds, and the Bible itself, to the most searching tests. Many, and profound, modifications are being made in men's beliefs. Meanwhile, the masses of the people, educated to have a certain regard for the Bible and their church creeds, are increasingly bewildered; and many of them are losing faith in all religion. There is not a church, perhaps, and hardly a community that is not now suffering from this unsettling of faith, due to changed interpretations of the Bible and modifications of creeds.

The far-reaching significance of this situation is not yet fully realized. It is a law of the religious, no less than the biological, world, that life is measured by the complexity and duration of its environment.

The less complex and permanent this environment is, the more feeble and perishing will be the life that depends upon it. Now the material of religious education is the principal element of the religious environment. It feeds the intellectual and emotional life of religion. It creates its atmosphere. It supplies the main conscious stimulus to action. If, then, this environment has been merely a creed or certain interpretations of Scripture, what must happen when the creed and scriptural interpretations are rejected? As elsewhere in life, religion must perish with its environment. This is no far-fetched analogy between natural and spiritual laws. It has its illustration and proof all about us. I knew an old man in the Middle West whose religious faith seemed to be entirely bound up with the doctrine of immersion. One day a man came into the neighborhood with a Greek New Testament and a little knowledge of exegesis. He convinced the old man that a certain phrase had been wrongly translated, and that Jesus did not go down into the water but merely to the side of the water. The result was that the old man became unsettled in his faith, stopped attending church, and finally, as he believed, lost his religion. Here was a case of a minute, fragile religious environment, with a religious life dependent upon it. This environment had been created by the man's faulty religious education. When it perished, the man's faith in all religion perished with it.

The only sure preventive of such tragedies in religious belief, is for religious educators to create, through their choice of culture-material, an environment that shall be universal and eternal. If there were no other reason for the creation of this new, and larger, environment for religion, it would be justified as a prophylactic against the numerous spiritual distempers that are now threatening to become epidemic as a result of the Higher Criticism. The Bible has been the sacred Palladium of Christianity throughout the centuries. The "unholy hands" of critical scholarship are now being laid upon it. There is grave danger for the religion that has been made so intimately to depend upon the Bible unless a new, and broader, environment can be created in which religious faith may find its home.

*Method of religious education.*—The method of religious education is determined by its material. If, as has been pointed out, this material should be drawn from the entire environment of the child, then ought the method to be as diverse as that environment. In other words, since the child's whole life reacts religiously to the world about it, so should the method of religious instruction insure complete self-expression. This is the essence of all rational method in education, because it is nature's own way of training every living creature. From the unicellular animal to man himself, life is fashioned through the complete self-expression of the individual. In so far as courses of religious instruc-

tion are conducted according to this universal principle, will they effectively accomplish their purposes. Experience, whether in the form of knowledge or otherwise, cannot become truly educative unless it involves the activity of the self, and the whole self.

Self-expression takes three forms: feeling-response, intellectual response, and motor response, or response through conduct. Feeling response, otherwise called interest, has already been discussed in chap. i. It is the form of self-activity that makes the mind and the life receptive, and prepares the individual to assimilate experience. The spontaneous interests of children are the natural responses to stimuli that are felt to have significance. It is as true pedagogically as it is scripturally, that "out of the heart are the issues of life." The recognition and intelligent use of this form of self-expression in children is of the utmost importance. If feeling-response, or interest, is neglected or crushed out, the tendency is to weaken the child's selfhood and destroy the personal initiative that is so essential to a vigorous life. On the other hand if attempts are made to stimulate artificially this feeling-response, there is danger of emotional precocity and perversion. This danger is especially great in those types of religious instruction that are intended to lead up to "conversion." Here premature feelings mean premature decay of feelings, or perversion in the direction of mental disease.

Again, the method of religious education should insure self-activity in thinking. The power of

selective thought is as important for religious as for other functions of life. To get the symbols of truth into the mind, whether these symbols be the words of the Bible or of a creed, avails nothing at all unless the soul reacts to them with the intelligence that comes from significant experience. Words are dead things unless we have that in our minds which can vitalize them. Religious instruction that does not deal with material to which the minds of students can react intelligently, arrests the power of thought, produces apathy of feeling, and therefore destroys the capacity for seeking truth and the interest in it. For this reason, the selection of biblical material that lies too much outside of children's actual experience, and the dogmatic attitude that is indifferent to free individual thought in young people and adults, render imbecile the intellectual life of any church, and condemn it to hopeless inferiority in religious standards and conduct. There is no sphere of life where abridgment of self-expression is more fatal to human growth and achievement than in the intellectual order.

Finally, the method of religious education should insure a motor expression of righteousness. That is to say, it should involve religious conduct. It is all very well to feel righteously and to think righteously, but the final test of both is the deed. How to make religion motor and executive is indeed one of the greatest of problems, personally and socially. It was Shakspere who said: "If 'twere as easy to do,

as it is to know what ought to be done, then chapels had been churches, and poor men's cottages princes' palaces." Religious educators must broaden their curricula and their methods in a way that will help boys and girls, and men and women, to work out their religious feelings and ideas. The heterogeneous manual exercises over sand-maps, the singing in choirs or performing other functions in the Sunday school, the taking part in young people's meetings, etc., will not suffice. These activities may be valuable, or worthless, according to the spirit and conditions under which they are performed. Motor, or executive, righteousness must come nearer to life than these activities can possibly come. It must be of a type that affects the character of the doer and that of his fellow-men. It must take the form of doing deeds of virtue, honesty, kindness, patriotism, and the like. A church and Sunday school that can make their religious instruction efficient through an organized body of righteous workers, in the home, business, politics, and throughout social life everywhere will have realized this ideal. The outcome of education in objective results that embody the ideas and impulses imparted through instruction, is the present aim, and often the accomplished fact, of our best public schools. There is no good reason why the same should not be true of the agencies of religious education.[1]

[1] The last two paragraphs are largely quoted from an article on "The Child's Self-Expression and Religious Education," published by the writer in *Religious Education*, August, 1906.

*Conclusion.*—This chapter on the problem of religious education has been theoretical and general in character. No attempt has been made to indicate the details of a working programme that would embody the aim, subject-matter, and method of religious education that have been suggested. In conclusion, however, I desire to state that essentially such a programme has long since been submitted to the test of experience, and is now in successful operation in our midst. To direct the attention of my readers to such a concrete embodiment of my ideals, will, I am sure, render them a more practical service, than to give a verbal description of a programme. I refer to the kindergarten system and to the institution known as the Young Men's Christian Association. In the chapter on "The Natural Religion of Children," I expressed the conviction that Froebel's philosophy of education, and the kindergarten system based upon it, afford the best existing approach to a kind of education for little children that will at once conserve their natural religion and bring that religion into harmony with a scientific interpretation of their environment and their own lives. In the best type of kindergartens, we find at least the beginnings of just such an education as this chapter has contemplated. There the aim is religious adjustment of the child to his entire environment. The material is composed of significant and typical elements selected from such environment; and the method is designed to insure complete self-expression.

In the Young Men's Christian Association, we have an institution that, in a different field, incorporates identical principles. The aim of this institution, at its best, is to effect a religious adjustment between young men and the entire environment of their lives. The Association badge, with its inscription "Body, mind, spirit," symbolizes this aim. Under favorable conditions, we find a building, equipments, course of study, and opportunities for a variety of activities, that provide for a breadth and complexity of religious training that is unequaled in any other institution. We find also that this material is presented to the members of the Association in a many-sided manner. An appeal is made to every form of self-activity—feeling, intellect, motor-activities, conduct. It is not contended that the Young Men's Christian Association is a perfected institution. It will not compare with the public schools, colleges, churches, and various other institutions in specific features of its work. But in the breadth of its aim, in the eclectic and comprehensive character of the educational environment it creates for young men, and in the freedom and spontaneity of spirit it evokes, it has seized upon principles that are fundamental and final for religious education. It is my conviction that the typical kindergarten and the typical Young Men's Christian Association illustrate what is thus far the best statement of the problem of religious education and constitute the most consistent attempts at its solution.

# INDEX

# INDEX


Adolescence, intellectual and emotional characteristics of, 75–77; appeal of prophetic and literary books of the Bible to, 75–77; appeal of gospels to, 76–77; interest of, in Jesus, 88–91, conversion in, 66–67, 90–91; religious education of, 94.

Age, as affecting the child's attitude toward school studies, 20, 74; toward the Old and the New Testament, 57 ff.; toward the different books of the Bible, 69 ff.; toward Bible scenes, stories, and characters, 77 ff.; toward Jesus, 85 ff.

Animism, in primitive men, 32; in children, 32–35; in adults of civilization, 35–36; interpretation of, 35–36.

Atkinson, on children's reading interest, 65, 66.

Atrophy, as a biological phenomenon, 12; illustrated in the chick's pecking interest, 12; in the child's walking interest, 12–13; application to moral and religious interests, 14.

Bacon, on natural religion, 26.

Barnes, Professor Earle, on elementary intellectual interests, 20; on children's ideals, 21; on the sense of causality, 41.

Barnes, Mrs. Mary Sheldon, on children's historical interests, 20, 74, 84.

Bible, place of, in religious education, 53–55; rational use of, 54–55; children's attitude toward, 56–57; children's choice between the Old and the New Testament, 57–69; among the books of, 69–77; among the scenes, stories, and characters of, 77–85; stages of racial development reflected in, 63–88; need of supplementing the Bible in religious experience, 113–15.

Binet, on elementary intellectual interests, 20.

Bolton, on memory for numbers, 74.

Burke, Mrs., on play interests, 20.

Causality, the instinct of, 36–41; Ratzel's views of, 37–58; von Hartmann's views of, 36; Sully's views of, 40; Barnes's views of, 41.

Characters, interest of children in, 80–85.

Chase, Miss, on reading interests, 20.

Children, instinctive qualities of, 63–64; sensory and motor development of, 64–65; natural religion of, 25 ff.; animism in, 32–36; instinct of causality in, 36–41; instinct of immortality in, 42–46; faith and goodwill in, 46–51; natural interests of as emphasized by the educational reformers, 1–7; psychological significance of children's interests, 8; biological significance of children's interests, 9–14; appeal of New Testament to, 58–62; appeal of Old Testament to, 63–66, 73–75.

Comenius, educational views of, 5–7; views on the natural religion of children, 26–27.

Darrah, on children's ideals, 21.

David, pre-adolescent interest in, 87.

Education, aim of secular, 102; aim of religious, 103–11; material of secular, 102; material of religious, 111–15; method of secular, 103; method of religious, 115–18; the kindergarten and, 29–30, 119; The Young Men's Christian Association and, 119–20.

Edwards, Jonathan, on the natural man, 15.

Ellis and Hall, on play interests, 20.

Faith, as an element of the child's religion, 46–51.

Froebel, on natural religion, 28–30.

Gates, Miss, on musical interests, 20.

Gilbert, on development of children, 64.

Good-will, as an element in the child's religion, 46–51.

Gould, on children's animism, 34.

Gulick, on play interests, 20; on conversion, 67, 91.

Hall, on play interests, 20; on the contents of children's minds, 40–41.

Hancock, on children's ability to reason, 66.

Herbart, doctrine of interest formulated by, 8, 9.

Immortality, the instinct of, 42–46; Sully's views of, 42; Street's views of, 44–45; racial economy of, 45–46; significance of, for the child, 46.

Interest, and the educational reformers, 1–8; Herbart's doctrine of, 8, 9; the biological conception of, 9–11; sequence of, 11–12; atrophy of, 12–14; opposition to doctrine of, 14–19; study of, by secular educators, 19–21; attitude of religious educators toward, 21–24.

James, view of relation between attention and will, 17.

Jegi, on children's ideals, 21.

Jesus, children's interest in, 85–91.

Kindergarten, as an embodiment of both religious and scientific ideals in education, 29–30, 119–20.

Lancaster, on altruistic feeling, 66; on prophetic spirit of adolescence, 76; on loyalty to Jesus, 89.

Lindley, on complex intellectual interests, 21.

Monroe, Professor Paul, on mediaeval conception of education, 3–4.

Monroe, Professor Will S., on children's ideals, 21.

Montaigne, protest of, against education of his time, 5.

Natural religion, the doctrine of interest and, 25–30; science and, 30–32; elements of, 32–52; significance of, for religious experience, 104–10.

O'Shea, on interest in pictures, myths, etc., 21.

Pestalozzi, on natural religion, 27–28.

Plutarch, on natural religion, 37.

Pre-adolescence, interest of, in David, 87.

Rabelais, satire of, on monastic education, 4, 5.

Ratzel, on the instinct of causality, 37–38.

Reflex activities, the correlative interests of, 10, 11.

Religion, natural to the child, 25; conception of children's religion held by educational reformers, 25–30; implications of, in scientific knowledge, 30–31; ethnological study and, 31–32; genetic psychology and, 32.

Religious education, complexity of the problem of, 99–101; suggestions from secular education, 102–103; aim of, 103–11; material of, 111–15; method of, 115–18; successful types of, 119–20.

Rousseau, educational views of, 7, 8.

Scripture, Professor, on time-memory, 75.

Sex, rise of interests in, 12; differences in biblical interests according to, 60, 61, 72, 73, 78, 80, 81, 86, 98.

Shaw, on primary intellectual interests, 20.

Speech, rise of interest in, 11.

Starbuck, on conversion, 66.

Stories, interest of children in, 79–80.

Street, on the instinct of immortality, 44; on language training, 74.

Sully, on the instinct of causality, 40; on the instinct of immortality, 42.

Taylor, on interest in the public-school curriculum, 20.

Tylor, on animism, 32.

von Hartmann, on the instinct of causality, 38.

Walking interests, 11, 12, 13.

Ward, Miss, on geographical interests, 20, 74, 84.

Will, in relation to interest, 16–18; in relation to attention, 17.

Wissler, on reading interests, 20.

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